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BLAKE AND ZOROASTRIANISM

**A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF DELHI
FOR THE DEGREE OF**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN ENGLISH**

**BY
SHERNAZ SETHNA-CAMA**

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Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own research and observations. The material found in it is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other diploma or degree of any university

Shernaz Sethna-Cama

(Shernaz Sethna-Cama)
Candidate

Rajiva Verma

(Rajiva Verma)
Head, Department of English
University of Delhi
Delhi-110007

**Head
Department of English
University of Delhi
Delhi-110007**

Santosh Pall

(Santosh Pall)
Supervisor

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Introduction

At a public lecture on William Blake by Dr. Kathleen Raine, over nine years ago, when I noticed similarities between the ideas and symbols used by Blake and my own religious upbringing in the Zoroastrian faith, the first reaction was to dismiss the idea as preposterous. How could there be any link between an eighteenth-century English poet and the ancient, almost pre-historic religion of old imperial Persia? Cultural interpenetration has become a catch-phrase of our times, but even if we hold with G.R.S. Mead that: "There is but one Religion for humanity. The sun of Truth is one,"¹ any attempt to connect William Blake with Zoroastrianism seemed abstruse if not bizarre. Had eighteenth-century Europe heard of Zoroastrianism? Could Blake have had access to Zoroastrian ideas? The Bible is known to be Blake's main source; its language influences all Blake's writings and he spent much time as an artist making illustrations to the Bible. Would such a Christian poet have been affected in his work by Zoroastrianism among other traditions--if so to what extent? These were the questions which came to mind.

In our times Harold Bloom has despaired of the "lunatic fringe of enthusiastic occult Blakeans -- likely to abide as the left wing of Blake studies until the veritable apocalypse,"² and for F.R. Leavis "wrong-headed cults"³ alone search for the sources of William Blake's ideas. For their interpretation of the poet such sources are not important. Despite such powerful criticism the idea would not be dismissed from my mind. Blake himself provided support when he said of his role as Artist that:

He had resolved to emulate those precious remains of antiquity, he has done so and the result you behold. Poetry as it exists now on earth, in the various remains of ancient authors, Music as it exists in old tunes or melodies,

Museum, the proof of this visual influence is available to us today. In Antiquarian books I found Blake's signed plates of Persepolis, ancient seat of the Zoroastrian empire which are reproduced in this thesis.

A considerable amount of space and time in the thesis has been devoted to tracing the links between Blake and Zoroastrianism, for factual evidence alone can prove the tremendous amount of material on Zoroastrianism freely available to William Blake in eighteenth-century England. The first part of the thesis gives a background to the Zoroastrian religion, its Prophet, symbols, terms and theology, in order to make clear the connections which follow while discussing Blake's poetry with reference to Zoroastrian ideas.

Against this background the thesis moves to focus on Blake's symbolic world--his use of fire, the Dualities, the concept of the Emanation, his strong faith in the unity of life, his Great Myth of the Emergence of man's Faith from out of Doubt, and his Vision of the Last Judgment. This symbolic world, however, has been discussed by scholars in the light of other traditions linked with Blake, principally the Biblical and the Western esoteric tradition, the philosophy of Boehme and Swedenborg, the Gnostics, Neoplatonists and the Alchemists. The Hindu influences on his writings too have been explored. All these have thrown much useful light upon various aspects of Blake's work. We find that most discussions on Blake raise the issue of the Dualities of Good and Evil and attempt to explore its various aspects. The world's mystical and religious traditions too have been occupied with the struggle of Good and Evil, Matter and Spirit, fundamental philosophical issues at the root of human life.

The issue of Good and Evil also undoubtedly occupies much of Blake's work, the poet himself stating that "Good and Evil are Qualities in Every man" (K, 615).

In the Western tradition the Original Creation is good but an aspect then turns to evil. It is seen that all his life Blake attempted to resolve for himself the question how a good All-powerful Creator could permit evil. Also, while Blake occasionally views the Creator as a demiurgic figure, he cannot wholly subscribe to this view. While considering these issues we see that the Zoroastrian dimension of the sacred tradition has so far remained unresearched by both the West and the East. The fact of evil is an integral part of Zoroastrian philosophy. Therefore, while we must bear in mind that the Zoroastrian interpretation is only one way of looking at Blake's works, could not this religion have given Blake some fresh insights into the problem of good and evil?

The thesis sets before the reader the Zoroastrian tenets of Good and Evil and explores to what degree they find reflection in Blake's writings. It will be seen that Zoroastrian theology acknowledges only one God, Ahura Mazda, Lord of Wisdom, but sees God as omniscient not omnipotent. The ideal structure of the theology of *The Gathas*, Zoroastrianism's most holy text sees the Good mind working with Righteousness and Benevolence to create a Holy Dominion. There perfection leads to Eternal Bliss. However the Prophet himself states that this world is not an ideal world, it is filled with imperfection. Zoroaster explains this by introducing two conceptions; those of Abstract Good and Abstract Evil, which in conflict explain the nature of reality. According to this, at the Beginning were two primal spirits, twins spontaneously active, the Good and Evil in thought, word and deed. When Zoroaster spoke of Good and Evil he was not speaking of deities or divinities. The term he used was the two Mainyos--a difficult term to translate but best seen as two Mentalities or spiritual attitudes: Spenta Mainya, the spirit of Goodness and Angra Mainya, that which attempts to frustrate it. The purpose of the Zoroastrian Creation and its philosophy is to inspire nature and humanity to

move with Spenta Mainya and thus bring forth the spirit of goodness throughout Creation. Evil will then be destroyed by the simple fact that evil when recognised as evil is not chosen, and when not chosen it gradually ceases to exist.

It will furthermore be seen that just as Blake regards an individual's freedom of choice to be paramount, in Zoroastrianism the soul develops by a philosophical acceptance of multiples from which arises choice. Each person has within the Urvan or Soul, literally the Chooser, and the stress is on the responsibility of man. Man does not suffer because of the faults of his parents, nor does God control man's actions. Man has free-will and must choose his creed, thereafter facing the consequence of his choice. Heaven and Hell are states to be reached or avoided by the correct application of one's own mental powers.

It is also examined in the thesis how the later heterodox Zurvan myth is a colourful interpretation of Yasna 30 of *The Gathas*. In these Pahlavi texts we find the Persian legend of the Devil begotten of Doubt. Zurvan Akarana is the First principle or Boundless Time. He offers sacrifice praying for a son but after a thousand years doubts the efficacy of his act. It is this imperfection in the Godhead, a departure from most traditions that hold the Godhead as all-good that creates evil. Zurvan's doubt is exteriorized in the birth of Ahriman or Satan while from his divine nature and penance Ohrmazd, the true inheritor, is born. So Zurvan becomes the father of Good and Evil and their clash begins. The Fall in this version arises from Doubt or momentary unsureness of self at the very heart of God, giving rise to the division of the personality. The purpose of the Cosmic drama then is to restore the shattered unity of being. This can only come through self-knowledge, which giving rise to true creativity will return Creation to its proper sphere in the rule of joy and goodness, where Ahriman's power will end.

This myth of Good and Evil, as seen in the thesis, is a visualization of the subjective states of the soul and the psychology of the individual. Heaven and Hell are experiences of the Spirit; heaven is joy and inner illumination, falsehood is darkness, spiritual blight. Man must overcome the errors and ignorance of the soul for evil will be vanquished by the universal attainment of wisdom when all Being reunites the divisions of the inner self

The thesis goes on to explore how Blake's psychology of evil has similarities with the Zurvan myth where evil is created by doubt. In the myth of Albion it is doubt which gives rise to the disintegration of personality. Man falls from harmony when his four basic energies or Zoas divide and come into conflict. This causes the deadening of the imaginative powers, the sleep of Albion. Blake recognised the eternal nature of this conflict of elemental forces as well as its application on earth. "The combats of Good and Evil is eating of the Tree of knowledge. The Combats of Truth and Error is Eating of the Tree of Life" (K, 615). On this earth, as in Zoroastrianism, Blake's characters too are educated through choice. They choose between the emanation or unlimited visionary capacity and the limited perceptions of the spectre. Each must live by his individual conscience, interpreting not only man-made laws but even the Bible for himself. Albion awakens, rejects the spectre of doubt; his divided personality becomes whole again and the illumination of wisdom is achieved.

The point that the thesis seeks to make is that Blake and Zoroastrianism reject Good and Evil as permanent states. Once the power of Satan or Ahriman is broken no doubts and therefore no evil can remain. It will be seen that for Blake also the Last Judgement is "a deliverance from Satan's Accusation" (K, 617). This

world is finally transfigured into the light of eternity where bliss will be available to all.

While studying the contraries of good and evil in Blake, the thesis also takes into account that Blake took many ideas on this from Boehme. It is known that the Dark Fire World and the Light Love World are Boehme's contrary states from which is born the creative spark which leads to the Outbirth. Boehme too believed in "Eternal Nature" from which comes the "Eternal Yes" contrasting with the "Eternal No," each energy necessary for existence. Boehme's, however, seems a more philosophical approach to the dialectical principle, a study of action and reaction unlike the more moralistic approach of Zoroastrianism. For Boehme, redemption from Adam's fall into matter and the sleep of succumbing comes with Christ who takes on the sins of mankind. Christ is Blake's saviour too; Zoroastrianism on the other hand has no prophet willing to bear the Cross for the sins of mankind, each individual must face his own deeds and destiny. Blake seems to fuse ideas from both philosophies. Christ is Blake's Redeemer but Albion can only reach redemption after reintegrating his own divided self. While Boehme's thought is thus touched upon, it is done briefly. It lies beyond the scope of the argument presented in the thesis to study Boehme in detail. He is seen only in so far as to trace the indirect links by which Blake could have known of Zoroastrianism.

The other philosophical issue examined in Blake's work when studying the poet from a Zoroastrian viewpoint is Blake's approach to Matter and Nature. While it is seen that Boehme's view of a double fall into matter deeply influenced Blake, the poet's own views on Nature and the Body are never consistent, often swinging between a denial of earthly life and a celebration of it. For Boehme human nature after the disobedience of Adam and Eve was degraded in contrast to

the pure life of the spirit. The Gnostics and Neoplatonists too view this world pessimistically. This raises a question: If Blake does not totally reject the body, did he know of a tradition which celebrates Nature and the human body? Could he have found this among Eastern traditions, in particular in Zoroastrianism?

In Zoroastrianism the World of matter is an emanation of the spirit and it is wrong to revile or ignore the material, mistakenly believing this will elevate the spiritual. Blake did say that "The Natural Body is an Obstruction to the Soul or Spiritual Body" (*K*, 755), but the worst crime for Blake is repression of the senses and evil is negating and suppressing the joys of existence. "The Four Senses are the Four Faces of Man and the Four Rivers of the Water of Life" (*K*, 733). Blake's aim was not to divide life but to reconcile reason and energy--the physical, intellectual and spiritual--to form a totality of experience. It is here, as we will see, that Zoroastrianism may have provided clues for, in it every being must unite his Menok or heavenly aspect with the Getik or physical state. Matter is meaningless without spirit, but spirit cannot act without matter. Both must be interassimilated to bring forth the perfected existence.

Blake believed in pre-existence, physical creation giving visual image to a pre-existent spiritual reality, just as Zoroastrianism believes in the Fravashis or pre-existent beings of each atom of creation. Despite occasional outbursts Blake does not totally support the theory that this earth is a punishment for some celestial sin or that the body is cursed and diabolical. "I feel that a Man may be happy in This World. And I know that This World is a World of imagination and vision . . . Some see Nature all Ridicule and Deformity and by these I shall not regulate my proportions . . . to the Eyes of the Man of imagination, Nature is imagination itself" (*K*, 731). In Blake's myth the fall comes when the harmony of spirit (*Urthona*),

Reason (Urizen), Passion (Luvah) and instinct (Tharmas), is disturbed as each aspect tries to usurp powers. The negation therefore of any aspect of man is error--the spectre exhibits its loss of humanity because of its loss of physical and emotional attributes. A better world has to be "Open'd within your heart and loins and wondrous brain" (K, 329). Similarly in Zoroastrianism the body is the seat of multiple energies. The Fravashis choose a material body to combat evil for spirit and body are married in the cosmic battle against destruction. Sex is positive, spiritual and sensual, it leads to the growth of personality and the children born of it are warriors for God's Good Creation. Blake celebrated the body as "a garden of delight" (K, 512) and had little patience with ascetic self-humiliation. Creation then is a stage which aids in the perfecting of Being, and matter and spirit, undefiled and fused become immortal in infinity.

While studying Blake it seems that the conflict in the poet which gives rise to his contradictory statements regarding Nature and the Body comes because Blake was an imaginative poet, mystic, humanist and ethical agent all together. Sensitive to the beauty of this world he could yet call it a "Phantasy" (K, 94). Vision was very important to him but so was the sanctity of the individual. For him the final annihilation of the narrow selfhood and the renewal of nature comes not with the destruction of individuality but by its fulfilment.

Blake's positive approach to nature and the Body is most apparent when one looks at his art. Nature is painted in glowing hues and the human body is fleshly, muscular, glorious--a celebration in all its beauty and splendour. A blind Urizen, a crawling Nebuchadnezzar or a beautiful Los, no aspect is rejected, the body never discarded. It is Blake's "human form divine," receptacle of spirit, seat of passion, symbolic of that "eternal glory" which makes it a part of the body of God. His

floating soaring figures incorporate earthiness with spirituality for to Blake "Everything that lives is holy" (*K*, 160), or to use Yeats's words on Blake: "Passions because most living are most holy and man shall enter eternity borne upon their wings."⁶ Finally Albion and all mankind arise perfected, as, we shall see, did Peshyotan in Zoroastrian myth who after the "tan-i-pasin," rises as the man with the perfected body.

The thesis concludes by examining how Blake's apocalypse is a proof of God's ultimate mercy for it is accomplished not with destruction but by regeneration. This has a parallel in the Zoroastrian Frashokereti, literally "Making Excellent" a time of reintegration when our own familiar world cleansed of evil and illuminated with Truth becomes Paradise. None are condemned eternally for sins committed in time, all life celebrates the harmony of the House of Song. In this perfected universe matter is clad in spirit and the Last Judgement becomes a time of joy. Each identity now eternal shines forth in perfection:

All human forms identified, even Trees, Metal, Earth and Stone. all Human
Forms identified, living, going forth and returning wearied into the Planetary
lives of Years, Months, Days and Hours reposing And then Awakening into his
Bosom in the Life of immortality (K, 747)

Finally, this thesis in attempting to unravel a so far neglected strand of Blake's mental fabric--the exploration of Zoroastrian influence on Blake--explains some of his literary and visual images, ideas and symbols thereby seeking to add to the already existing interpretations of the poet. Blake could look outward and assimilate ideas from all traditions including Zoroastrianism for he was secure in his own true faith--a Christian in the best sense of the term. He would therefore reinterpret and recast themes and symbols ^{from other traditions} in the context of his own myth and that of

Christianity. Wherever Blake's ideas may be gathered from, as influences or parallels, the creative spirit for Blake is the caring Christ who saves humankind. Ultimately for the poet it is "The imagination . . . Jesus" (K, 776) who initiates the redemption. His sacrifice awakens Albion from his stupor. He takes upon Himself the burden and body of error to put it off eternally. Blake's cosmic drama concludes with Christ's sacrifice but his humanism requires Man to play his part. Albion must accept Christ as "The All in Man . . . the Divine Image or Imagination" (K, 773) and cast out Satan "this Body of Doubt" (K, 741) giving himself up to Faith and Belief. Only then will perfection be manifest.

Blake lived and died by his poetic creed, believing in man's freedom of will he opposed evil fearlessly wherever he found it yet refused to reject any aspect of existence. Thus in his life and works he makes use of a vast variety of ideas, bringing together many strands of thought to weave a fabric of immense beauty and complexity.

The six divisions of the study are explained briefly.

Chapter - I : Eternal Attributes : The Background

This introduction traces Blake's roots in the sacred tradition of poetry. It examines the social, economic and industrial upheavals of eighteenth-century Europe which led Blake and other Romantic writers away from secular interests and towards myth, mystery and the Orient. Oriental, Greek and Christian myth, three important streams of the sacred tradition, unite in the writings of the Speculative Mythologists particularly Jacob Bryant who formed an early yet lasting influence on Blake. Blake would develop his symbols and myth on the basis of Bryant's belief in a single universal tradition. The second part of the Chapter shows how at the same

time there was a political movement towards the East; consequently the French, German and English romantic movements were influenced by Persia for Persia offered an exotic yet acceptable alternative to the Judaeo-Christian world view. A brief survey is made of authors who used Zoroastrian ideas in Blake's age. The third part discusses Zoroastrianism: its date, Prophet, Theology, cosmogony, texts and history are presented till the recent refuge in India. The Chapter concludes in seeing Blake's work and Zoroastrianism as comparable Gospels of Joy.

Chapter - II : A Golden String: Blake's Sources of Zoroastrian Ideas

This chapter turns to Blake's links with Zoroastrianism. The indirect links are the Jewish, Old Testament, Neoplatonic and Gnostic philosophies; the Zoroastrian heresies of Mithraism and Manichaeism, Boehme, Swedenborg and the English occultists. The direct links are more important and consist of a large number of engraved books by travellers, Antiquarians and the Speculative Mythologists. Bryant, Maurice, Hyde, Anquetil du Perron are amongst some authors discussed. The alchemical writings too are briefly surveyed. Blake's work for Ree's *Cyclopaedia*, with his signed plates on Persepolis, is included. We finally turn to Blake's use of the few prominent Zoroastrian symbols and his visionary links with Persia.

Chapter III : Good and Evil: The Dualities

Blake's early work is seen in the light of the Zoroastrian contraries of Good and Evil. This dualism is examined along with Blake's changing attitudes towards the concept. Firstly a study of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is made in the light

of the Zoroastrian union of the Body and Soul. Blake's dualism is then traced as it develops through *The Songs of Innocence and Experience*. The contraries are seen even within Blake's structure of language. As Blake develops his theory of dualities the Zoroastrian idea of the necessity of contraries in this world becomes linked with Blake's tragedies of single vision. *The Book of Thel* becomes a tragedy of inaction while the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* and *The Book of Ahania* are representations of blighted vision. Finally from *The Note Book* we study Blake's ideas of Good and Evil, the Spectre and the Emanation in the light of Zoroastrian thought.

Chapter IV : Flames of Growth

This chapter discusses Blake's use of fire. Fire is the central symbol of Zoroastrianism and the Fire Principle as seen in Blake's texts and in his visual manifestations becomes the uniting of diversity, an idea which culminates in *The Tyger*. Blake also uses fire as Flames of Revolution, the symbolic form of which is Orc, developing it to create Flames of Regeneration in the character of Los who comes to represent the creative principle of Fire. *The Song of Los* and *The Book of Los* are studied. The Zoroastrian Hell of ice is seen as opposed to flames of growth just as in Blake's writings the Urizen figure is opposed to Los. *The Book of Urizen* is then examined. Finally we see the visual emphasis on flames of creation particularly in the illustrations to Milton and Dante.

Chapter V : From Doubt to Faith: The Emergence of Consciousness

Blake's Great Prophecies are seen in the light of the Zoroastrian myth of the

Emergence of Consciousness from Zurvanism, *The Bundahishn* and *The Denkart*. The four-Fold story of Doubt, Division, Illumination and Unity is studied for its links with the visuals of *The Night-Thoughts* illustrations and the story of Blake's Four-Fold Man in *Part I: Vala or The Four Zoas* and *Part II: Milton*.

Chapter VI: At Heaven's Gate: Ultimate Perfection

The last of Blake's epics ends with the perfecting of Albion in *Jerusalem*, his final Prophetic Book, the unity achieved also reflecting the Romantic ideal of synthesis. Visual parallels with Zoroastrianism in Blake's last work *The Book of Job* are examined. We come to the conclusion of this thesis where ^{some} Zoroastrian ideas on death and the hereafter seem echoed in Blake's *The Grave illustrations*, *The Vision of The Last Judgment* and *The River of Life*.

Note: A word sometimes occurs in more than one form, according to its usage in different periods of Zoroastrian history. Generally the most commonly used spellings are followed, e.g. Zoroaster instead of Zarathushtra.

Notes

¹ G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: The Gnostics: A Contribution to the Study of the Origins of Christianity* (New York: University Books, 1960), p. 6.

² Harold Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument* (1963; rpt. Garden City; New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., 1965), p. 477.

³ F.R. Leavis, "Justifying One's Valuation of Blake," in *William Blake: Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes*, ed Morton D. Paley and Michael Phillips (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 80.

⁴ Geoffrey Keynes, ed., *Blake: Complete Writings with Variant Readings* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1976) All references to Blake's writings, page and line numbers, unless otherwise stated, are from this edition and follow the quoted passage in the text.

⁵ John Beer, "Influence and Independence in Blake," in *Interpreting Blake*, ed., Michael Phillips (Cambridge: New York, London, Melbourne: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 200-01.

⁶ William Butler Yeats, "William Blake and the Imagination," in *Essays and Introductions* (rpt. London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 113.

Chapter - I

Eternal Attributes: The Background

"In my Brain are studies & Chambers fill'd with books & pictures
of old. . . ."

Blake to Flaxman
21 Sept, 1800.

The writings of William Blake can be read in a variety of ways. They lend themselves to personal, political, psychological, mythological and archetypal interpretations and can function at these different levels at one and the same time. Blake however worked within the framework of a tradition; it was not merely the academic or literary tradition of English literature but the far older sacred tradition of prophets and thinkers who base their writings upon spiritual insights. Christ to Blake was the symbol of the prophetic vision and voice, but as perceptively noted his was an "undogmatic Christianity."¹ Blake, very much a man of his time, was also a member of a universal visionary company.

The ideas and symbols of the sacred tradition are as old as the history of mankind. The word "tradition" comes from the Latin "Trad" "to hand on" or "to continue," and it is this continuity or carrying forward of ideas which is basic to this line of thought. Anthropologists and archaeologists have traced similarities in ideas between races and cultures spread out across the world and have studied the migration of symbols from remote civilizations to the modern world. Writers, artists, sculptors, all those who follow and create in this sacred tradition share a great deal, their "visions" often drawing upon a body of what Kathleen Raine calls "excluded knowledge,"² that which has been gathered from remote antiquity, from religious and philosophical schools of thought as

well as from the intensely felt experiences of the mystics. Throughout history two currents of thought run parallel--the secular tradition which is the surface tradition of nations, and manifests itself in the historical, academic and intellectual developments of each race, and the sacred tradition--less obvious, a hidden underground source which is nevertheless the fountainhead of all wisdom. It is this revealed wisdom which is an inspirational source of man's being. Blake, the Prophet-poet, belonged to the second stream, that of a universal, permanent tradition, as opposed to the increasingly materialistic developments of his time.

Blake has been regarded as an isolated figure, neglected by his contemporaries and cut off from the main currents of his time. While 1757, the year of his birth, causes him to appear in bibliographies as an Eighteenth-century poet, the early Prophetic Books date with the early work of the Romantics, and like them Blake's creative period began when the French Revolution had reached its crisis. It was a world of tremendous political, technical, economic and social change, when European civilization alternated between intensely high hopes of a Paradise on earth and the threat of total collapse into disorder. In 1787 Blake met the bookseller Joseph Johnson through whom he came into contact with the English radical set; Godwin, Tom Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft. They were all great supporters of the doctrine of liberty and believed that after the American and French Revolutions mankind would reach the millennium. Like many poets of the time, particularly the Romantic writers, Blake shared their beliefs and supported the French Revolution in its earlier stages. Blake in *The French Revolution* (1791), *America* (1793) and *Europe* (1794), praises the spirit of Revolution and supports liberty against restraint.

The historical events of Blake's England shaped his life and poetry; after 1794 a

reaction had set in. The Terror in France gave rise to panic in England and the ruling classes felt threatened and vulnerable. The English radicals who had so far been tolerated were now persecuted: Paine fled to France, Godwin moved away from politics to philosophy and speculations, Mary Wollstonecraft devoted her great energies to the problems of women. The poets reacted by withdrawing into themselves. Blake moved away from the political field into the field of the mind; the energy which he had devoted to the Revolution now found release in the world of the imagination. Within a few years he was to say:

I am really sorry to see my countrymen trouble themselves about Politics. If Men were Wise, the Most arbitrary Princes could not hurt them. If they are not wise, the Freest government is compell'd to be a Tyranny. Princes appear to me to be Fools. Houses of Commons & Houses of Lords appear to me to be fools; they seem to me to be something Else besides Human Life.

(Public Address, 1810, K., 600)

The great promise and failure of the French Revolution, its revolutionary and reactionary effects led to a profound cultural crisis in Europe. The politicians had failed to usher in the new world; it was left to the poets to re-kindle hopes. The Romantic poets believed they were to become the "unacknowledged legislators" of mankind. But even as the horrors of the French Revolution undermined man's confidence in himself, another great upheaval, the Industrial Revolution, began making its effects felt. Thus by the end of the eighteenth-century beliefs, which had withstood generations of change, could no longer satisfy. As Isaiah Berlin comments:

Men had believed that to the central question about the nature and purpose of their lives and of the world in which they lived, true objective, universal and eternal answers could be found. . .

This was the great foundation of belief which Romanticism attacked and weakened. . . . There runs through their [Romantic] writings a common notion . . . that truth is not an objective structure, independent of those who seek it . . . but is itself in all its guises created by the seeker. . . . Hence that new emphasis on the subjective and ideal rather than the objective and the real . . . , on motives rather than consequences . . . on the quality of the vision . . . rather than getting the answer right.³

The façade of eighteenth-century Reason and stability hid an England in great turmoil. The early eighteenth-century had believed that science could produce a blueprint of the universe. By the end of the century the analytical worldview of the Enlightenment had failed. The European, Christian tradition had been the only path to faith available, now travellers and philosophers were discovering that other paths existed. The old European answers had not sufficed and the seekers had to look again.

Blake's movement away from the secular stream of thought to inherited wisdom was an attempt to find synthesis in a fragmenting world. Industrial urbanization, the dislocation of the old class structures and the fragmentation of society that Blake had witnessed affected him deeply and was to be transmuted into the main metaphor of his Prophetic Books. When the cool detachment and abstraction of eighteenth-century intellectual complacency failed, the creative mind moved to the opposite extreme, to all that was primitive, wonderful, original and picturesque.

The movement towards the esoteric traditions is explained by Coleridge:

The writings of these mystics . . . contributed to keep alive the *heart* in the *head*, . . . during my wanderings through the wilderness of doubt, enabled me to skirt, without crossing, the sandy deserts of utter unbelief.⁴

Blake, and major poets of the Romantic age turned to the past and to myths, using them

"as symbolic conveniences," or what M.H. Abrams calls "metaphors for poetry."⁵ The older world view gave the poets a frame of reference against which to measure the problems of their time. Nostalgia for the past was also a result of apprehension about the future. The myths of the past gave reassurance for, as Mircea Eliade comments, "myths reveal that the world, man and life have a supernatural origin and history, and that this history is significant, precious and exemplary,"⁶ and most important of all in an age of doubt, myths stress that the golden ages are recoverable, the world can renew itself even when the present time seems full of despair.

In the perennial stream of the sacred tradition the three main sources of myth and mysticism are the Oriental, the Greek and the Christian. Blake uses all three; his greatest debt is to the Biblical, Judaeo-Christian source, but classical thought is an important element in his mythology and blended with both are borrowings from the East. From the Renaissance onwards the West treasured all the information it received regarding Hinduism, Buddhism and the Persian religion. Passages citing these faiths and their exponents are popular in European literature and names such as Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus and Pythagoras are linked and used to provide support for many esoteric doctrines. Information was derived from classical sources, and from travellers for as Désirée Hirst writes: "The Indian 'Brachman' or 'gymnosophist' was a venerable figure . . . to be ranked with the Persian mage, the Egyptian sage or the disciples of Pythagoras."⁷

Towards the end of the eighteenth-century Speculative Mythologists became the vogue and produced a number of writings. Some of these writers were eccentrics, some of the myths purely products of their own imagination, nevertheless as Edward Hungerford comments, what was important was, "not so much their wild surmise as their exhilaration."⁸ For Blake, as for other eighteenth-century thinkers, they constituted

almost a revelation; unknown worlds opened up for the European reader and as events far older than the Bible sometimes challenged established Christian beliefs there came to be an unexpected alliance between the mythologist and the liberals.

Blake who was influenced by all three sources of myth was not the only voice to proclaim that 'All Religions are One.' The mythologist-antiquarian Jacob Bryant had already challenged the view that only the Bible was divinely inspired and Blake was deeply influenced, visually and ideologically by the engravings and ideas contained in *A New System or an Analysis of Ancient Mythology*⁹ on which he had worked as an engraver's apprentice in Basire's shop. Bryant's *Mythology* was *The Golden Bough* of his time, and Persian mythology, the Zoroastrian faith, engravings of Persian sculpture and temples as well as translations from the Zoroastrian sacred book *The Zend Avesta* form some important sections of Bryant's work. Thus very early in his career as an artist Blake had been exposed to these ideas gathered by Bryant along with Indian, Greek and Hebraic mythologies.

The Biblical tradition undoubtedly provides the main source for Blake's writings but an insight into the other source material available to Blake dispels the belief that his was a wild, untutored talent filled with the strange visions of an almost insanely individualistic mind. Blake's creativity and originality are based on a thorough knowledge of the esoteric tradition and the 'excluded knowledge' available in his time. Blake's work as an engraver brought him into direct contact with different modes of thought. He had worked on the Portland Vase while engraving a set for Erasmus Darwin's *Botanic Garden*¹⁰ and with the Greek revival he was also exposed to Platonic and Neoplatonic thought. But by the late eighteenth-century, "One firm belief persisted. The Greeks and Romans were merely intermediaries. Wisdom is from the East. The Greeks received this wisdom from Egypt or from Babylonia, Persia or further east."¹¹

Blake's search for true wisdom led him to Gnosticism, alchemy, the Kabbalah, some of his known teachers included Swedenborg, Paracelsus and Jacob Boehme. He had learnt of Hinduism through Sir William Jones's *Proceedings of the Calcutta Society*; and the lost painting of Mr. Wilkins translating the *Bhagwad Geeta* entitled "The Bramins - A Drawing," suggests his knowledge of and interest in the Hindu scriptures. These traditional sources stimulated Blake's original insights and revealed to him that the search for sacred knowledge leads men at all times to the same road.

It is impossible to know what exactly Blake read, but from the number of authors cited in his *Note Book* and writings he obviously had read widely. Apart from his small personal library he had access to almost any given book of his time, through the libraries and bookshops of London and the collections of his acquaintances. As an engraver he was most likely to have seen books which contained illustrations and it is probable that he had greater access to books published in England than books published abroad. Among his contemporaries Tatham has said of Blake that, "he had read almost everything in whatsoever language, which language he always taught himself . . ." ¹² The Bentley and Nurmi *Bibliography* offers more concrete clues: a list of books owned by Blake, as well as information about lost articles; one such manuscript was described by W.M. Rossetti as "a scrap of paper in the same [Blake's] handwriting giving a few details about names of gods in different mythologies." ¹³

In all his readings and from his sources Blake searched for the truth of mans' origin. The antiquarians and mythologists who took him backwards in time, seemed to narrate the same truth for their myths were variants of a single universal theme. In *All Religions Are One*, Blake says:

As all men are alike in outward form, so . . . all are alike in the Poetic genius. The Religions of all Nations are derived from each nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius, which is every where call'd the spirit of Prophecy.

As all men are alike (Tho' infinitely various), So all Religions & as all similars, have one source.

(*All Religions Are One*, K., 98)

In the *Descriptive Catalogue* Blake spells out his indebtedness clearly:

The antiquities of every Nation under Heaven, is no less sacred than that of the Jews. They are the same thing, as Jacob Bryant and all antiquarians have proved.

(*A Descriptive Catalogue*, K., 578)

While commenting on the influence of Bryant's book Erdman, whose thesis emphasises the contemporary political and social milieu, has acknowledged that Blake's, "Concept of esoteric, cultural power, came from the antiquarian Jacob Bryant, in whose *New System or Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, published in 1774 1776, with plates engraved in Basire's shop, scholars are now finding both Blakean pictorial motifs and some clues to Blake's own system of mythology"¹⁴ And Geoffrey Keynes commenting on the fact that Bryant's book offered "several other possible sources of ideas which came to fruition during Blake's maturity," touches on the Zoroastrian link:

Lastly and most remarkable of all, on Plate 2 is illustrated, "Zor-Aster Archimagus before an altar with a particular covering like a Cupselis or hive, taken from Kaempfer's *Amoenitates Exoticae* "

Keynes realises that the design of this plate contains an important visual influence which Blake would use for four of his own designs, but he does not take up the clue.

Reproducing the same plate Keynes concludes that such designs,

are given as evidence of images, which Blake certainly saw, during his boyhood, and afterward reproduced and transformed for his own purpose, by passing them through the furnace of his creative imagination.¹⁵

Bryant's theory of the single universal myth of which all existing myths were variants, helped develop Blake's idea that the events referred to in the original myth were psychological, and history a recapitulation of these mental events in the physical world. Therefore when Blake had to explain the story of mankind he would do so like Yeats who:

Made my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies
From heel to throat.¹⁶

Besides the mythologists and antiquarians another source of the esoteric tradition available to Blake was the literature available on magic, alchemy and astrology. The ideas and symbols of magic were very popular upto the end of seventeenth-century, their powers still affected the popular mind, for the awe they inspired had survived the onslaught of the Industrial Revolution. Blake's mind was spontaneously attracted by the angels and fairies, heavenly influences and unseen emanations, still alive in the popular imagination, and his ideas therefore must also be seen against this background.¹⁷ If myth and mysticism looked to the East, so did magic. In these brief glimpses of the Orient inquiring minds found a new understanding and wider horizons. Romanticism has generally been seen as an introspective, subjective movement and it therefore seems contrary to stress the external influences on the writers of that time. But Blake and others

who belonged to that turbulent period journeyed outward, towards an enlarged human understanding before they began their journey within.

I

By the end of the eighteenth-century while the underground stream of the sacred tradition was distinctly flowing eastwards, political events too had conspired to turn men away from a Euro-centred universe to lands beyond. With industrialisation the western world seemed to have lost its inner wisdom, and for the thinker, the Orient, at least at first glance, offered an alternative. Contacts between the West and the East had always existed but with the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798, there began, "a virtual epidemic of Orientalia affecting every major poet, essayist and philosopher of the period."¹⁸ The Orient was exotic, mysterious and profound but it had to be interpreted before it could be understood. Its own people had lost the key, European study alone would unveil the truths of the past. Political expediency encouraged this outlook, for the products of the Industrial Revolution would soon need new markets, and a vast captive world extended from China to the Mediterranean. Official patronage led to the formulation of institutions such as the Société Asiatique, The Royal Asiatic Society, and the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft and with them came a growth in the number of Professorships and academic posts for Oriental studies across Europe. Awareness of the Orient increased too as a result of new discoveries and translations of Oriental texts in languages like Sanskrit, Zend and Arabic, while the first Orientalist periodical the *Fundgraben des Orients*, published in 1809, helped disseminate scholarship.¹⁹

During this age, besides the well known researches into Indian religions and

culture it is essential to realise that Persia's ancient religion had become a focus of critical study and debate. England and France contributed equally to the study of Zoroastrianism. While the Oxford scholar Hyde's *Veterum Persarum*²⁰ published in 1700, was the first attempt to synthesise all existing knowledge regarding Zoroastrianism, this rather Christian interpretation led the Frenchman Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil du Perron (1731-1805) to set off across the world to trace the actual books that Hyde had described. Avestan studies, the actual exploration of the Zoroastrian texts, began when this young Frenchman brought back from his travels to Surat in India, the first translation of the *Zend-Avesta* in an European language and presented it to the King's library. This remarkable man also translated the *Upanishads*. Unacknowledged and often derided in his life time, today we realise that the effect of his works on Oriental studies has been enormous. As Raymond Schwab says in tribute:

He had dug a channel between the hemispheres of human genius, correcting and expanding the old humanism of the Mediterranean basin. . . . Before him, one looked for information on the remote past of our planet exclusively among the great Latin, Greek, Jewish and Arabic writers. The Bible was regarded as a lonely rock, an acrolite. A universe in writing was available, but scarcely anyone seemed to suspect the immensity of those unknown lands. The realization began with his translation of the *Avesta* . . . Into our schools, up to that time limited to the narrow Greco-Latin heritage of the Renaissance . . . he interjected a vision of innumerable civilizations from ages past, of an infinity of literatures . . . the few European provinces were not the only places to have left their mark in history.²¹

France was the first country to explore and exploit the political advantages of Oriental studies. In 1793 an *École publique* was established in the Bibliothèque Nationale to teach Arabic, Turkish and Persian thus to try and codify even the most

recondite knowledge. Napoleon would later use the students of the great Sylvestre de Sacy, (who from 1796 taught Arabic at the e'cole publique des langues orientales), to formulate his collection *Description de l'Egypte* published in twenty-three volumes between 1809 and 1828.²²

It was initially through the French that the Orient was revealed to eighteenth-century Europe, not merely as an exotic mystery but as an intellectual challenge with a wealth of texts and languages and civilizations whose intellectual and historical dimensions were almost unimaginable. The French studied the Orient at first hand, Anquetil had adventured across the continents of Europe and Asia to gather his knowledge. The Germans' Orient on the other hand was more of a scholarly adventure. The growth of romanticism and philosophical idealism had aroused an interest in myth. The German idealists were very aware of the Orient and to them, as to others in a war-torn Europe, its myths seemed to offer a key to artistic and religious survival. The Germans began research into comparative mythologies in their idealistic search for a common underlying culture. It was this which also started off the German analysis of comparative philology. While German scholars examined the Orient in close detail, to the German romantic poets it became subject for their verse, but as there was no imperial German presence in the East, no actual physical contact between the two cultures existed. Perhaps this political distancing gave German oriental scholarship its paramount intellectual authority in later years, but in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the two famous German works on the East, Goethe's *Westöstlicher Diwan* and Schlegel's *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* were both based on information gathered in libraries. To the Germans India and Persia were lands of wonder, the furthest limits of the earth, magic names with which to conjure. Travellers' tales of the Orient were popular, Marco Polo had been translated as early as 1477 and Olearius translated the Persian *Gulistan* in

1654 under the title *Persianischer Rosenthal*.²³ In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries German literature needed the romance of the east, their own writers in the earlier sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had been absorbed in religious controversy and the Thirty Year's war had crushed the creativity of the nation.

Numerous writers turned to the Orient for their setting and to Persia in particular for the Faust legend. For them Zoroaster's name was associated with magic and in the Faust legend he is the prince of magicians whose book Faust studies so diligently that he is called "a second Zoroastris."²⁴ As Friedrich Schlegel said in 1800, "It is in the Orient that we must search for the highest Romanticism."²⁵

Schlegel approached the east in the spirit of a holy mission by trying to re-vitalize Europe with what he learnt from the orient. It is with Goethe, however, that the Persian influence on German poetry becomes most apparent, for him the Orient was a place of pilgrimage where one could restore lost values, "there in purity and righteousness will I go back to the proposed origins of the human race," and:

North, West and South disintegrate,
Thrones burst, empires tremble.
Fly away, and in the pure East
Taste the Patriarchs' air.²⁶

With the *Divan* poems Goethe brought the poetic spirit of the East into German verse. His "*Parsi-naméh*," or "*Buch des Parsen*," The Book of the Parsees, deals with the legacy of the old Persian faith, and takes the form of a message from a poor and pious man at the point of death. Not only does he use the main Zoroastrian symbols of fire and light but close details are found even on minor points of doctrinal purity as well as discussions on the ethical values of the Zoroastrian faith. Goethe had obviously made a

thorough study of Zoroastrianism for his short "*Parsi-nameh*" and his notes in "*Notes and Discussions*" conclude by stating that:

It can hardly be doubted that in the course of ages much good is due to this religion which spread over the western part of the East, . . . There remained temples of the pure fire, . . . how glorious was the organisation may be gathered from the extraordinary men who came from thence.²⁷
(See Appendix A)

Goethe uses Zoroastrian ideas directly, while Victor Hugo felt that his own strong mystical learning, made him a divinely inspired mediator for mankind and placed himself in the same rank as the ancient Persian prophet Zoroaster.²⁸ Voltaire on the other hand had his curiosity regarding Zoroastrianism satisfied by information collected in a series of letters by M. Bailly.²⁹ Voltaire's interest in the religion was primarily to try and find a challenge to the Christian Churches' monopoly of truth, and he wrote an article on Zoroaster for his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*.³⁰

These Zoroastrian ideas which spread across Europe, permeating its most sensitive minds did not leave England untouched. Of all the nations of Europe, England had the largest imperial presence in the Orient and the interaction between England and the east took place at various levels: political, military, economic, social and intellectual. It is interesting to note that the political attitude of the English towards India affected their intellectual and cultural relationship with Persia. At first India had been officially presented to the English in extremely simplified terms. The early English Orientalists were careful not to allow Hindu scriptures to challenge Hebraic antiquity or doctrines directly, and India was explained as a kindred spirit whose many gods and goddesses could be easily seen in relation to those of the Greeks and Romans.

In 1783 William Jones was appointed Judge of the Supreme Court and when in 1784 he founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal, true research into India's depth of thought began; by the end of Warren Hasting's career English literature and literary studies on India had established a two-way contact between the nations. India represented a new hope. For the English radicals Hinduism had a strong appeal; it seemed to be a religion of liberty without restraint, its goddesses, its lingams--its myths totally opposed to the male, authoritarian Hebraic tradition. Here was a culture which was apparently made up of differing, often contradictory elements, whose tremendous freedom of interpretation enabled the English radicals to read their own messages into its myth. Christianity had become too limited; for them India offered freedom of choice.

Ironically, as the political subjugation of India brought its culture and religions into closer contact with the West, and as genuine Oriental studies revealed the complexity of Hindu culture and faith, those same radicals moved away from India as swiftly as they had been drawn towards it. As the Orient of the exotic tale was replaced by the mundane reality of heat and dust there was a tremendous sense of disappointment. For as Gerard de Nerval said - "to one who has never seen the Orient a lotus is still a lotus--for me it is only a kind of onion."³¹

India had been overvalued, the swing of the pendulum as seen in Goethe's attraction towards and subsequent repulsion from India is typical of the European romantic sensibility. Goethe's alternative was one which would appeal to many of his time. When "China was too barren, India too monstrous a jumble, Persia . . . tempted him to linger."³²

England had known of Zoroastrian doctrines many years before the Romantic movement. The Oriental movement had fascinated Blake, Godwin, Southey, Peacock,

Shelley, Byron--but after the radicals' disappointment with India they felt betrayed at various levels. They had thought it offered liberty--this turned out to be a hoax for India had become a subject nation. Its religions were dominated by priestly authority, socially it was imprisoned by the caste system, and while women might appear liberated in rock and temple sculptures the horrors of sati were very much alive. To the liberal mind Hinduism was no longer attractive.

It was at this point that Zoroastrianism offered an alternative. It had all the qualifications necessary to attract the romantic sensibility for it dated back to the pre-history of the world; its myths had always formed part of European antiquity it was exotic yet comprehensible. Its ethical values were crystal clear its symbols universal and it directly confronted questions of good and evil which haunted all men and in particular the Romantics. Above all its humanism appealed, for like other Eastern faiths it was a religion which stressed the importance of man. Man had freedom of choice--he was not damned at birth by the sins of his first parents, he could aspire to and reach the highest heaven as a result of his own endeavours, and only through the combined efforts of mankind would the final perfecting of the world be achieved. Man was therefore integral to the Cosmos. The bewildering pluralities of Hinduism did not exist here, and this simplification of choices attracted the Western mind. Persia, the most western civilization of the east stands geographically at the mid-point between east and west. In the eighteenth-century it seemed to be intellectually the safest distance that the western mind could traverse.³³

A surprisingly large number of English writers used Zoroastrian ideas in their works. Persia fascinated the public in the exotic tinsel portrayal of "Lalla Rookh."³⁴ Thomas Moore's (1779-1852) poem was offered three thousand guineas, the highest price on record by Messers Longmans--even before it had been completed. Moore recounts

how he had searched for a subject to suit his style till he finally discovered in the oppressed "fire-worshippers" of Persia a counterpart of his own countrymen, "The cause of tolerance was again my inspiring theme."³⁵ Southey's (1774-1843) knowledge of Zoroastrianism came most probably through Picart's *Religious Ceremonies*³⁶ which had fascinated him even as a schoolboy and which provided the seeds for most of his future work. "Before I left school I had formed the intention of exhibiting all the more prominent and political forms of mythology which have at any times obtained among mankind by making each the groundwork of a heroic poem."³⁷ Southey had planned various epics based on material gathered from his vast reading and centred around heroic types. He managed to write the epic of Islam--"Thalaba" and that of the Hindus, "The Curse of Kehama," but the great plan of an epic based on the pre-historic Zoroaster was never put into action.³⁸ In the novels and travels of James Morier, Persia was presented with flawless fidelity and *Hajji Baba*, *Zohrab the Hostage* and *Ayesha* were all very popular, these books revealed close details of Persian life, knowledge of which Morier had acquired during his residences as private secretary to Sir Harford Jones and Sir Gore Ouseley.³⁹

Wordsworth's *Excursion*, Byron's *Childe Harold* and drama *Sardanapalus*, Thomas Love Peacock's *Ahrimanes* and Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound* all reflect knowledge of Zoroastrian themes to a greater or lesser extent.⁴⁰ While in Shelley's poem "The Magus Zoroaster," meets what appears to be Shelley's interpretation of the Zoroastrian Daena concept, *Sardanapalus* is a romantic drama in the exotic setting of the Persian Court.⁴¹

For all these English poets Zoroastrianism was a pure religion. Except for a minuscule minority of worshippers it was to them a dead religion, one which had ruled

much of the known world and was now preserved in frozen perfection as an example of true uncorrupted worship.

II

The term "Zoroastrianism," and the wisdom of the Magi were therefore common knowledge to the poets and thinkers of Blake's age, yet accounts of the ancient Persian faith differed widely, ranging from close philological studies to entirely apocryphal "Oracles," the more sensational the better. There was a vast European literature based on Biblical and classical accounts, travellers tales and antiquarian discussions on Zoroaster and his religion, Persian life, customs and traditions, but to distinguish the true from the false it is essential to know some details of the faith. Even today the average educated man knows nothing of Zoroastrianism except that Nietzsche used the Prophet as a mouthpiece to expound his views on the Superman. Nietzsche the great immoralist deliberately presented a picture of Zoroaster which was almost the exact opposite of the truth, he was not at all ignorant of the real Zoroaster but his point was not made for the public did not understand the irony, and he himself confesses his disappointment in *Ecce Homo*.⁴²

Due to a general paucity of information and lack of awareness about the ancient Persian faith, before we turn to the main focus of this thesis it is essential to present the main issues of Zoroastrianism, its concepts, and very briefly, its history. It is not easy to explain Zoroastrianism for a study of the religion gives rise to many problems. Preached in remote antiquity, by a Prophet who claimed Divine revelation by the one true God, its monotheism could not completely convert a traditionally polytheistic society, as yet

unprepared for the totality of Zoroaster's message. Over the centuries the religion amalgamated into itself a variety of beliefs not originally taught by the Prophet. Through the vicissitudes of history it also lost much of its literature and only a fraction of the original teachings remain today. Once State Religion of the ancient world's greatest conquerors it survives now primarily through refugees who found sanctuary in tolerant and hospitable India.

In 1789 in the "Sixth Discourse on the Persians" in the *Asiatic Researches*, Sir William Jones tried to summarize, "That, which Newton calls the oldest (and it may be justly called the noblest) of all religions":

A firm belief that one Supreme God made the world by his power, and continually governed it by his providence; a pious fear, love and adoration of Him; a due reverence for parents and aged persons; a fraternal affection for the whole human species, and a compassionate tenderness even for the brute creation.⁴³

Today it is proved that Zoroastrianism is the oldest revealed religion, one which "has probably had more influence on mankind, directly and indirectly than any other single faith."⁴⁴ Regarded as ancient, even by the Old Testament writers, it can be traced to a very distant, most likely Bronze Age past. Zarathushtra, its Prophet was known to the Greeks as Zoroaster, and Zoroastrianism derives its name from this name they gave its Prophet. Because Zoroaster lived in what for the Iranians were pre-historic times it is impossible to establish fixed dates for his life. The traditional date which used to be given by Zoroastrians was "two hundred and fifty-eight years before Alexander." This would date the Prophet's life between 628-551 B.C.⁴⁵ However, this dating clashes with the much earlier Greek tradition, for three Greek writers, Xanthus the Lydian, Diogenes of Laerte and Pliny the Elder place him around 6000 B.C.⁴⁶ Both these wide-ranging

dates, 600 B.C. and 6000 B.C. can be challenged and since the end of the last century a second millenium date has been found to be more generally acceptable.⁴⁷ It is believed today that Zoroaster lived between 1700 B.C. and 1500 B.C. and that he flourished when the Stone Age of Iran gave way to the Bronze Age.⁴⁸

Though the dates may be controversial and while his figure remains shrouded in mystery, all classical antiquity agrees upon the point that Zoroaster was a historical personage. For the writers of Greece and Rome he was the most famous representative of the Magi; to them he sometimes seems more famous for magic arts ascribed to his powers than for his philosophy and religious teachings. However, throughout recorded history he has been regarded as a Prophet and sage whose name was synonymous with the wisdom of the Persians.

The Magi were a tribe of priests and Zoroaster himself was a priest or Zaotar, the son of Pourushaspa and Dughdhova of the Spitaman family. Western and Eastern scholars have debated over the meaning of the Prophet's name. While Western academicians interpret it philologically as deriving from the words "Zarath" and "Ustra" to mean "one whose camels are old,"⁴⁹ to Zoroastrian scholars of the east, it is a compound of Zaratha, Golden, and ushra-light, and the name of the Prophet is taken to mean "He of the Golden Light."⁵⁰

Zoroaster's own ideas are known to us basically from the *Gathas*, seventeen hymns, which he composed and which remain preserved for posterity. They have come down to us as part of the liturgical text, the *Yasna* composed of seventy-two Ha-s or chapters. These hymns are inspired, poetic utterances many addressed to God Himself, written in a dialect known only from the *Gathas* and very few other ancient texts. The style of these hymns is complex, Zoroaster must have interpreted his own teachings more

simply to reach the common man. Like most Zoroastrian religious teachings, these hymns were handed down orally through the centuries, till they were finally written down in Pahlavi or Middle Persian under the Sasanian kings of the third Iranian Empire. The *Gathas* form the oldest part of the Zoroastrian scriptures, which are collectively known as the *Avesta*, a title which means "authoritative utterance."⁵¹

According to popular tradition Zoroaster was thirty years of age when revelation came to him. It is said that at a gathering to celebrate the spring festival, Zoroaster went at dawn to the river Daitya (Oxus) to fetch water for the rituals. He waded in to fetch it from midstream and on emerging from the purity of the water, into the freshness of a spring dawn he had a vision. On the bank he saw a shining being, who revealed himself as Vohu Manah, Good Mind, and led him into the presence of Ahura-Mazda and five other radiant Beings, "he did not see his own shadow upon the earth owing to their great light,"⁵² and it was then that he received his first revelation. In the Prophet's own words:

As the holy one I recognized thee, O Wise Lord
 When he came to me as good Mind,
 When first I was instructed in your words.
 Suffering among men will be caused to me by my zeal.
 To carry out that which you tell me is the greatest good.⁵³

(*Yasna*, 43.11)

The new Prophet was not well received in the land of his birth, for a long time his only disciple was, Maidhyoi Māongha, the son of Pourushaspa's brother Ārāsti. But though he was persecuted his faith did not falter. After ten long years, discouraged by the failure of his mission with his own countrymen, the prophet resolved to travel to other lands:

To what land shall I flee? Where bend my steps?
 I am thrust out from family and tribe;
 I have no favour from the village to which I would belong
 Nor from the wicked rulers of the country:
 How then, O Lord, shall I obtain Thy favour?⁵⁴ (Yasna, 46.1)

He left his home to travel to ancient Chorasmia, an area comprising of what is today Persian Khorasan, Western Afghanistan and the Turkmen Republic of the former USSR,⁵⁵ where King Kavi Vistaspa and his wife Hutaosa showed themselves favourable to his mission. Zoroaster performed several miracles in the presence of the Court and held long discussions there with learned men. Slowly but surely his message gained popularity and after some setbacks caused by the enemies of the Prophet, Vistaspa became openly a convert to the Zoroastrian faith, one who "came forward as the arm and help of this religion, the Ahunc, Zoroastrian . . . and set it in the place of honour."⁵⁶ This was the turning point, for even though accepting the teachings involved Vistaspa in battles with neighbouring princes, the survival and spread of Zoroastrianism is proof that these battles were fought successfully by the upholders of the new religion. Virtually nothing is known of the years Zoroaster spent in dignity and honour at Vistaspa's court. He died according to tradition at seventy-seven, struck down by an assassin while praying in the fire-temple, at Balkh. His faith developed among the Eastern Iranian peoples before moving to the Western areas of the Medes and Persians. By the time it reached these imperial people, most likely in the seventh century B.C., it was already venerable, and this agrees with the fact that by the time the Greeks learnt of Zoroaster through Western Iran he was to them a figure of immense antiquity.⁵⁷

On moving from the historical personage to his teachings, it can be seen that many features of Zoroaster's religion are based on common Indo-Iranian, or Aryan traditions. The doctrine of Asha, Vedic Rita, is fundamental to both the *Gathas* and the

oldest Vedic hymns. Asha or Ashoi can be loosely translated as "purity," or "righteousness," a purity not merely earthly or bodily but spiritual as well, whose true significance is that it is the cosmic law on which all depends. Asha is the eternal truth and the path to God can only be accomplished through Asha.⁵⁸

This belief in a divine plan or order is based on Zoroaster's firm faith in the Unity of being. Zoroaster taught that there was only one good God, worthy of worship--who was Ahura Mazda, Lord of Wisdom. All divine goodness was comprehended within Him, and division and evil only appeared because of the hostile Angra Mainyu. Many volumes have been written on whether or not Zoroastrianism is a "dualistic" religion, and many more will have to be written if any conclusion is to be reached regarding this issue, Zoroaster undoubtedly preached two spirits, but his philosophy cannot be called dualistic in the common sense of two co-eternal, co-equal powers. Evil is a disruption of the fundamental Unity of Asha and because it negates, it destroys. Evil is the antithesis of good but the conflict between the two will end with the triumph of the good spirit when evil shall ultimately perish. Wisdom for the individual lies in choosing correctly, in following the path of righteousness or Asha and thereby becoming a part of the unity and goodness of the Universe:

Now at the beginning the twin spirits have declared their nature,
The better and the evil,
In thought and word and deed. And between the two
The wise ones choose well, not so the foolish.⁵⁹ (Yasna, 30, 3)

The supremacy of Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord is uncontested. He is the perfect being, "The first and the last."⁶⁰ One of the titles of Ahura Mazda, which is often personified as an independent spirit is Spenta Mainyu, "The Holy Spirit." When Zoroaster gives his doctrine of the duality of the primeval spirits, Ahura Mazda's name is

replaced by the appellation Spenta Mainyu and placed in contrast with Angra Mainyu, the evil spirit. These are the "twins" who represent the good and evil aspects of existence. Intense debate rages as to whether both the twin spirits emanate from Ahura Mazda for, in the *Gathas*, *Yasna* XXI.1, is a disputed passage. It is perhaps easiest to understand them according to the "Life" and "Non-life" principles, as representing two phases, Creation and Dissolution, both essential activities for the progress of the universe. However, while in Hinduism Shiva's role as the Destroyer is clearly sanctioned as essential to the being of the Trinity of Creator-Preserver-Destroyer, Angra Mainyu or Ahriman's role is not only negative but evil. Evil is not mere illusion, it exists in the realm of reality, and while the law of Asha works to perfect the world, the counter-law of Druj or wickedness is equally at work. Both Professor Boyce and Dastur Dhalla agree that evil cannot owe its existence to the good spirit, for it is doctrinally alien to orthodox Zoroastrian tradition that evil can originate from Ahura Mazda,⁶¹ yet it is this same disputed verse of the *Gathas* which has given rise to the Zurvan heresy and a Zurvanite interpretation of the simultaneous birth of good and evil was common knowledge among early European scholars of Zoroastrianism.

A discussion of the 'contraries' in both Blake and Zoroastrianism will follow later, for one may refine endlessly upon various interpretations of good and evil, but what is more important is that the existence of these two principles brings us to the central position man holds in the Zoroastrian world.

Complete freedom is given to the individual. The path of Asha exists, but each individual has to choose the path he wants to follow. There are no cycles of rebirth in Zoroastrianism by which a man can work out his karma, nor is there a saviour who will bear the cross for the sins of mankind. According to Zoroastrian theology each human being has within himself an Urvan, often translated as "soul," but whose literal meaning

"The Chooser," conveys its significance much more accurately.⁶² Each man is told by the Prophet when he first proclaims his message:

Hear with your ears that which is the sovereign good,
With a clear mind look upon the two sides
Between which each man must choose for himself

Watchful beforehand that the great test may be accomplished in our
favour.

(*Yasna*, 30.2)⁶³

The basic change ushered in by Zoroaster's religion was this stress on individual ethics. There is "an onward movement . . . from collective to personal morality, or from custom to conscience."⁶⁴ The movement is away from group ethics to an individual choice, for the defeat of evil and the renovation of the good world can only come about through the conscious effort of each individual. Zoroastrianism places a great responsibility on man--in his actions lies his salvation. The call to action stresses the fact that mere meditation upon spiritual problems is insufficient--the spiritual battle is not to be fought in cloistered retirement but in the struggles and suffering of the everyday experiences of the world. For the Zoroastrian, a saint is not one who sacrifices all for a self-centred personal salvation but one who sacrifices himself for others. Thus domestic and social virtues have to be developed for the path to God does not lie away from but through the joys and trials of humankind.

Zoroastrianism has been called "the religion of action,"⁶⁵ because only by right action can good be advanced and evil defeated. Zoroaster's entire teaching can be compressed into the three commandments every Zoroastrian child learns "Humata, Hukhta, Huvarshta," i.e., "Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds," for thoughts are the root of all action and good deeds the ultimate result. In this religion of action, work is

a cardinal feature; the sacred girdle or "kusti," a badge of faith that every Zoroastrian is invested with, is tied with the repetition of verses, the actual knot being made at the word "shyaothananam" or "working."⁶⁶ The Zoroastrian girds himself up to be a worker of the Lord, the best service to God being service to His Creation.

Despite this stress on duty and obligation Zoroastrianism is a religion of joy, it is, as Boyce puts it, "a life-enhancing, not a world-denying faith."⁶⁷ It offers hope and strength to fulfil one's purpose in life and its discipline is tempered by joyous observances. Asceticism is totally opposed, for a weariness with this world saps vigour. Holiness in Zoroastrian terms means abundance, the Avestan word "holy" is "spenta" which is also translated as "bounteous."⁶⁸ The Divine nature is seen as a super-abundant life, both in the material and spiritual sense, for Zoroastrianism accepts and enjoys the good things of both the physical world and the world to come. The unity and wholeness which is preached shows that both spiritual and material worlds are intimately linked, for both are part of the universal process and harmony that was marred by the corruption introduced by evil. When good triumphs this world, perfected and renewed, will become divine.

In Zoroastrian cosmogony the universe is divided into two main parts. That which is conceivable but not perceptible is Menok, spiritual or invisible; and Getik, which is material, visible, perceptible. As Dastur Bode puts it, "all the qualitative things belong to the spiritual world, the quantitative to the material world."⁶⁹ Creation is possible in the uniting of the Menok and Getik for when spiritual force operates on matter the world comes into being. This coming together of the two states which constitutes the act of creation is called in Pahlavi the "Bundahishn."⁷⁰ With the realization of the Getik stage the battle with evil begins for material creation is vulnerable to attack. According to the myth as seen in the Pahlavi books Angra Mainyu

attacked God's good creation by breaking in through the sky and marring its perfection. He plunged through the waters creating salt, and attacked the earth forming deserts. He withered the plants and attacked the first created beings--the Bull and the First Man. The last part of creation to be contaminated was fire which was sullied by smoke. Evil had effectively marred the entire physical creation. The good creation fights back--the essence of the plant was cast across the world to grow again, the seed of the Man and Bull purified to create more men and cattle.

Cosmic history had till then been static for the world was perfect. The attack of evil brings in the second period, that of "Mixture," when good and evil blend in the world, and evil tries to destroy all good. To restore the world to its perfect state Ahura Mazda will need the help of all the beneficent ones and finally the Frashokereti⁷¹ or Renewal of existence will be achieved, when wounds will heal, history will cease, and evil will be destroyed.⁷¹

The troubles of this world are therefore seen as temporary, and have to be borne as part of the battle with evil. Zoroaster offers this explanation of the sorrows of the world, for affliction is not brought about by a perverse Creator but by the hostile spirit and there is always the hope and belief that these sorrows will end. Because this world of matter is an emanation of the spirit, the material world is part of the divine plan and Zoroastrianism in no way reviles or ignores the material body to elevate the soul, nor does it feel that the body prevents the advancement of the spirit. A man is as responsible to his body as to his soul and therefore concern for health and physical well-being are as important as concern for the spirit. Only by a unity of body and soul can the highest ideals be reached for within man's material frame lie spiritual principles. As long as

matter and spirit work together there is life, death is the separation from each other of the two parts.

In the concept of the Amesha Spentas both material and spiritual issues combine. The importance given to the material creation can be seen by the fact that each of the seven creations of the earth is protected by these divinities who represent the principal aspects of Ahura Mazda and who were the radiant Beings of Zoroaster's first vision. Along with Ahura Mazda they form a heptad and in turn they evoke other lesser beneficent divinities. All these divine Beings work at their own appointed tasks to further good and defeat evil. The Amesha Spentas or "Holy Immortals" are also known as "Yazatas"--"the adorable ones"--or "the beings worthy of worship."⁷² They are:

Of one mind, of one voice, of one act: whose mind is one, whose voice is one, whose act is one . . . They (who) are the creators and fashioners, and makers, and observers and guardians of the creations of Ahura Mazda.⁷³

On the spiritual side the Amesha Spentas are abstract forms of virtues and ethical concepts, while on the physical plane they preside over an aspect of natural phenomena as its guardian spirit. In keeping with the Zoroastrian tenets of unity therefore, both the spiritual realm and material creation are consecrated in these angelic Beings. The order of prominence of these spirits differs at times but normally Vohu Manah or the Good Mind is the first in the celestial hierarchy. Good intentions proceed from him and lead man to good words and deeds. He is the Lord of Cattle in the physical realm, a role which implies the imagery of a shepherd, cherishing and caring for the good creation.⁷⁴

Asha Vahishta, Supreme Truth, stands for the eternal law which upholds Creation. The importance of this Holy Immortal causes him to be associated with the outward symbol of Zoroaster's religion--fire, and so Asha is regarded as the Lord of Fire.

Fire and Light are both sacred emblems of purity and the Zoroastrian meditates on righteousness before the fire of Ahura Mazda. Khsathra Vairya stands for Power and Majesty, - "Desirable Dominion" or "The Good Kingdom,"⁷⁵ and represents the strength and sovereignty of the Creator as well as the celestial riches of Ahura Mazda's kingdom. On the material plane he is guardian of metals--the riches embodied in the mineral world. Khsathra Vairya's power will enable the righteous soul to pass through the ordeal of molten metal, at the end of the world before the "good Kingdom" is restored on earth. Spenta Armaiti, "Bounteous Devotion," Haurvatat, "Health," and Ameretat, "Immortality" are the last three Amesha Spentas. Armaiti is feminine, she is the constant companion of the Zoroastrian for only through devotion can man travel to God. She is also identified with the Earth Mother, and at death man is left in her care. The twin spirits of Health and Immortality are always spoken of together in the *Gathas*. Haurvatat represents spiritual wholesomeness or health, the perfection of life and Ameretat or Immortality is the freedom from death which inevitably accompanies perfection. Water, upon which all life and well-being depends, is assigned to Haurvatat and the plants and vegetable kingdom come under the care of Ameretat. Because health is the perfection of man's life on earth and immortality the eternal reward for his soul in the next world, these twin divinities grant happiness now and for ever.

Zoroaster assigned man to the care of Ahura Mazda Himself - through His Holy Spirit Spenta Mainyu. Thus the entire world is united through the doctrine of the Amesha Spentas, personifications of what is desirable spiritually and guardians of physical existence. Through them, Zoroaster weaves together the abstract and the concrete, the material and the spiritual, once again stressing the harmony that is the ultimate goal of life. When the seven Immortals abide in man evil cannot touch him and as Ahura Mazda's own creation Man has a special duty towards the six lesser creations.

The ethical code which the doctrine embodies gives man a unique sense of responsibility towards the earth and all created beings. The duties enjoined on Zoroastrians to protect the environment, nurture trees and plants, care for animals, enrich the soil and keep earth, water and fire unpolluted can all be seen as stemming from respect for the Amesha Spentas protectors of all creation. Therefore a comprehensive system of ethics, and philosophy combines with the need for physical well-being and responsibility.

Of the lesser divinities Sraosha is the Lord of Prayer, the Yazata of Obedience. His vast powers to aid mankind are invoked by prayer and he is called upon at moments of spiritual or physical distress, particularly at the time of death. In later Avestan literature he appears with Mithra and Rashnu as a heavenly tribunal to judge the dead.

Ashi Vanguhi "The Good" or "The Blessed," is associated with Sraosha, she is the female genius of sanctity and represents the Holy Blessing. In later times these blessings were understood in more material terms and Ashi became a sort of goddess of Fortune.

Atar is the third Yazata mentioned in the *Gathas* and is identified with the element fire. Fire was sacred in the Iranian tradition even before Zoroaster, the fire cult being a heritage of the Indo-Iranian tradition. There were supposed to be ten holy places devoted to fire even before Zoroaster's time⁷⁶ but Zoroaster purified the archaic form of fire worship and incorporated it into his own doctrine. He raised fire and light to the highest position, by making light in every form emblematic of Ahura Mazda's own nature. On the spiritual level Atar or Fire stands for the inner, divine spark which glows within every man. Fire is also a symbol of the purity of Ahura Mazda for fire cleanses all corruption and therefore its role at the last Judgement and renewal of existence is of paramount importance.

Zoroaster's teachings on the hereafter have influenced numerous religions and

schools of thought. He was the first to preach the doctrine of an individual judgment, Heaven and Hell, the Renewal of the Perfected Body, and the last Judgment and the immortality of the soul, all of which were to become common articles of faith for mankind through borrowings by the Jews, Christians and Islam, yet it is in Zoroastrianism itself that they have their fullest coherence.⁷⁷ According to the Prophet, salvation depends entirely on the action of an individual, his thoughts, words and deeds decide his fate. A man's spirit travels on the third day after death to the Chinvat Bridge, the Bridge of the Separator where Mithra, Sraosha and Rashnu judge the thoughts, words and deeds of the departed soul and the good is weighed against the bad. The good soul is led to Paradise by a beautiful maiden its Daena, and the bridge for such a soul is broad and easy to cross. For the wicked the bridge contracts to a razor's edge and a wicked hag pulls the soul down to hell. A third world is Misvano Gatu where souls, whose good and evil deeds balance, lead a gray existence. The souls wait for the Frashokereti when evil will finally be destroyed, and all things purified culminating in the Last Judgment. At this time the metal in the mountains will melt into a glowing river of molten metal which will flow over the earth, "Then all men will pass into that melted metal and will become pure."⁷⁸ This burning river will destroy evil and after a final sacrifice by Ahura Mazda, men will become immortal. It is this world of ours which will be restored to perfection, mountain and valley will level to become plain and the rich variety of the world will remain perfected and renewed.

This account of Zoroastrian cosmogony requires an understanding of three concepts fundamental to the faith; the Daena, the Fravashi, and the Urvan which are all linked to ideas of the hereafter. The Daena has been mentioned as the beautiful maiden who accompanies man to the next world but is more commonly seen as the Inner Self, the perception which each man has within him, the mirror image of the soul, and by

which he communicates with the Holy Spirit. Of all the spiritual faculties of man it is the Daena or conscience which appears as the soul travels towards the Chinvat bridge:

And it seems to him as if his own conscience were advancing . . . in the shape of a maiden fair, bright, white-armed, strong . . . as fair as the fairest things in the world,

And the soul of the faithful one addressed her, asking: 'What maid art thou, who art the fairest maid I have ever seen?'

And she, being his own conscience answers him 'O Thou youth of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, of good religion, I am thy own conscience. . . . I was lovely, thou madest me still lovelier; I was fair and thou madest me still fairer. I was desirable and thou madest me still more desirable.

(*Yasht*, XXII, 9-14)⁷⁹

If the Daena is the personified conscience, the Fravashi and the Urvan have equally important roles. The Fravashis' form an integral part of the Zoroastrian faith, the longest *Yasht* is dedicated to them, the last ten days of the year are set apart for them, the nineteenth day of the month is consecrated to their memory and the first month of the Iranian calendar is named after them. Like Plato's Ideas they constitute the eternal essence of things. Earthly creations are their imperfect copies. They existed when Ahura Mazda lived alone, they were His concepts of material and spiritual creation. However they have not remained mere abstractions--they have an objective existence and are workers like the other spiritual Beings of heaven from where they come down to earth. Every object is endowed with a Fravashi. Ahura Mazda has His Fravashi, so do all plants, animals, objects and men, from the Supreme Divinity down to the smallest creature every one contains this divine element. Only the evil in creation lacks a Fravashi. At birth the Fravashi which has existed from all eternity comes down to earth,

it becomes the guardian spirit and guide, or as Dhalla puts it "The higher double of the child's soul."⁸⁰ The Fravashi remains eternally pure, the ideal goal for which the soul should strive. The soul is responsible for the good and evil deeds done in this world, it receives reward or punishment accordingly, but the Fravashi remains unaffected and at death returns to the celestial realm, henceforth, however, living as the Fravashi of a particular individual. The Fravashis' are invoked for aid at all times and are constantly commemorated by the faithful. The Fravashis' honoured are not only those of the dead but also of the living and of those still to be born; of all the righteous at all times:

I desire in my worship to approach toward every Holy Fravashi,
whosoever, it may be; and wheresoever dead upon this earth.

(*Yasna XXIII-3*)⁸¹

While the commemoration of the Fravashis' of the dead does represent a type of ancestor worship, by invoking the Fravashis' of the present and the future and of all the righteous the individual is again taught the cardinal Zoroastrian concept of the unity of creation. All humanity is one and each individual a link in the chain, the past present and future all further the same aim.

The Fravashi and the Urvan often shade into each other. While the soul confers individuality and must be remembered in prayer and offered sacrifices, the Fravashis' of the departed are called upon to aid the living and often these two kinds of prayer overlap. As Boyce puts it "one prays *for* the urvan but *to* the fravashi," the first needs man's help, the second is his protector.⁸²

While the Fravashi is the eternal essence in man, the Urvan or soul is the chooser or the discriminator. The soul is responsible for actions and their consequences for it has

freedom of will. The Urvan is looked at in a more personal fashion; the soul for thirty years after death is believed to need the offerings of its descendants and offerings of prayer, food and clothing are made even to this day. The responsibility for performing the rites for the departed Urvan are enjoined especially for the first year after death, and thereafter for thirty years after which, in a shading of one into the other, the individual soul or Urvan is believed to join the great company of the Fravashis' of the righteous.

Before concluding this brief summary of the Zoroastrian creed, the role of fire in Zoroastrianism has to be discussed. Zoroastrians have been wrongly regarded as "fire-worshippers" from the earliest times because of the reverence they pay to this element. In ancient times fire formed an indispensable part of the Indo-Iranian rituals, and sacrifice to the elements of fire and water were common to both Indian and Iranian cultures. Originally evolving from respect for the hearth-fire, the centre of a household, offerings to fire became a part of all rituals and fire and water, elements vital for life, received their portion at every solemnisation of sacrifice. The ancient ritual of fire was developed philosophically by Zoroaster who, moving away from mere worship of the physical element, made fire a visible symbol of the truth. The fire-altar became the focal point of the Zoroastrian cult, for by concentrating on this symbol man approaches closest to the Creator. To defile this pure element is a heinous sin and fire temples, particularly the great fires of the Iranian dynasties became the most commonly recognized representations of the Zoroastrian faith. The symbolic significance attached to fire is apparent in the ceremonies required for consecrating a sacred fire in a temple. Different types of fire are collected from various places, homes of all classes of society, and even those fires used for cremation and incineration. These are purified with elaborate ceremonies, and the final fire collected in the vase and revered in the fire-temple teaches a Zoroastrian that just as all these fires have by process of purification come together and

been exalted, so before God all men are equal provided they purify themselves and preserve purity of thought, word and deed.⁸³

Thus we see that while Zoroaster uses natural elements to explain his message, he creates a complete and complex theology and philosophy using them to build upon the basis of a simple ethical message--good thoughts, good words and good deeds. Zoroaster, showed great foresight in sanctifying and preserving each branch of the earth's creation. That a man could evolve and preach such a relevant gospel in a Pre-historic Bronze age setting is remarkable. As Paul J. du Breuil asserts:

That a religion, or its cultural tradition, which taught that God was wise and good, the friend and brother of man, while every other religion was teaching the fear of a choleric and terrific God. A religion which taught that the human spiritual destiny depends on our own good thoughts, words and deeds while most religions were still looking for divine omen out of animal guts. A religion which taught love of all nature and creatures while so many others only paid attention to man's idolatry through anthropomorphic theology. A religion which considered women as equal to men while so many others, as well as most of the Greek philosophers like Aristotle's misogyny, denied that women had a soul. A religion seeing the end of the world as a cosmic apocalypse instead of a local Mesopotamian Flood. A religion seeing a spiritual resurrection of the soul instead of believing in an absurd material new life of the same physical body. A religion which placed the most important human event in what happens in every man's psychology, according to the purest ethical philosophies and modern psychological science. Then, should not such a wonderful fore-knowledge let us think that such a strong religious philosophy has still nowadays something to teach our desperate world?⁸⁴

This "strong religious philosophy" has today a following of barely a hundred

thousand souls. The reasons for this dwindling can be traced through history. Under Vistaspa, Zoroastrianism grew in strength to become the state religion of Iran in the time of the Achamenians. Cyrus the great and Darius have left inscriptions in which they ascribe all their greatness to the bounty of Ahura Mazda. In the great inscription at Naqsh-i-Rustam Darius says:

A great God is Ahura Mazda, who created this earth, who created yonder sky, who created man, who created happiness for man, who made Darius King . . . This which has been done, all that by the will of Ahura Mazda I did. Ahura Mazda bore me aid, until I did the work.⁸⁵

Tradition says that Daraius had all the sacred scriptures of Zoroastrianism collected and inscribed on parchment in letters of gold. This collection of the twenty one *Nasks* was deposited in the Imperial Library at Persepolis.

The Achamenian Empire is today best remembered by the magnificent ruins at Persepolis and by the Royal tombs cut in the mountain at Naqsh-i-Rustam. These ruins have attracted the attention of travellers and historians to the Zoroastrian religion for centuries for they contain sculptures based on Zoroastrian themes and religious symbols. Zoroastrianism had thus acquired great spiritual and temporal power when in 331 B.C. Alexander of Macedon defeated Darius III in battle. Alexander-the Great--to the western world, is "Alexander the Accursed" to the Persians for according to legend he destroyed the original religion by killing its teachers, and quenching its fires. He caused irreparable damage by burning the palace at Persepolis, the entire Library with its collection of Scriptures perished in the flames.

After Alexander one of his generals Seleucus established his rule and the Seleucids were succeeded by the Arsacid dynasty which originally came from Parthia.

Zoroastrianism was once again the dominant religion of Iran and the rulers began the work of recompiling the Avestan texts. The Parthian Vologeses I (A.D. 51-77) started the recompilation which was ultimately completed only under the Sasanian King Shahpur II (A.D. 309-379).⁸⁶ The Parthians initiated three of the great sacred fires of Zoroastrianism, Adur Burzen-Mihr, Adur Farnbag and Adur Gushnasp.⁸⁷

The third Zoroastrian dynasty was that of the Sasanians which rose to greatness with Ardashir, who united the whole of Iran and restored the lost glory of the Achamenians. The Sasanians did a great deal to propagate the ancient faith of Iran and translate the scriptures into the language of the people. Religious propaganda was spread by the priests Tansar and Kirdar but as the religion became more and more hidebound and dependent on priests, this also became the period of the rise of the Zoroastrian heresies; Manichaeism, the Mazdakites and the Zurvanite interpretation of the scriptures. The scriptures dating from this time no longer contain lofty idealism but like the *Vendidad* are full of details regarding penance and purification for sins. The positive achievement of the priests of this time was the invention of the "Avestan alphabet." Based on the Pahlavi alphabet it permitted the *Avesta* to be written down; every surviving Avestan text was recorded and finally, "at the council of Khosrow Anoshirvan, King of Kings" was "published the twenty-one divisions as it had been decreed."⁸⁸ The Sasanian *Avesta's* twenty-one nasks or divisions correspond to the twenty-one words of the sacred Ahunvar prayer, and the Nasks were sub-divided to contain firstly the *Gathas* and texts associated with them, secondly works of scholastic learning and finally treatises of instruction for the priests.

After this brief period of glory the old religion collapsed with the fall of the Empire. The vigorous faith and proselytizing zeal of Islam accompanied by slaughter, looting and destruction were too much for the ancient faith to withstand. As the

community in Iran were increasingly persecuted and crushed, they fell into a state of poverty and ignorance. While most of its citizens became converts to the materially attractive Muslim faith, a few remained determined to preserve the past glory of their religion. For a century they fled into the mountains of Iran from where ultimately they set sail for India. The *Kissah-i-Sanjan* preserves the story of these refugees. Written in A.D. 1600, it traces events from the loss of sovereignty of Yazdagird in A.D. 651 to the landing of the refugees at Diu on the Kathiawar coast of India and from there to Sanjan, where the local ruler Jadi Rana permitted a settlement with liberty to follow their faith on the condition that these Zoroastrians would adopt the language and dress of the host country. In A.D. 790 they received permission to build a fire temple and from then onwards the history of these Parsis--or people from Persia--becomes a part of the history of the Indian subcontinent.⁸⁹ India nurtured the remnants of the Zoroastrian faith, preserved its scriptures and permitted the sacred fires to burn again--Zoroaster's message was once more freely available to mankind (See Appendix B).

Human truths and values are eternal, much of what Zoroaster taught would be repeated in the messages of other thinkers and Prophets, but as we shall see in the following chapters a vast literature on Zoroastrianism was available to the Western world and in the eighteenth century, Blake not only had access to but worked on Zoroastrian material. Mysterious cultures and traditional wisdom attracted all the Romantics but Blake's cast of mind would be even more attracted to what Darmesteter calls "a religion of life," for "no creed could give greater dignity to life; raise man as man, nearer the God above, imbue him deeper with sense that life [is] worth living." This famous lecture on "Parsi-ism" goes on to state that:

A great religion never dies: even when annihilated by sword and fire, it still lives on unknown and unrecognized, in many hearts that ignore it. Persia could burn the Avesta . . . forget the name of Zoroaster and Ormazd still the inner soul of the popular religion remained unchanged.

And in a pertinent remark Darmesteter realises "how far beyond what seems to be its natural field extends the action of your Sacred Book."⁹⁰

Zoroaster has been regarded as the first Prophet and centuries later Blake too saw himself as belonging to the race of prophets--for to him prophets were those who beheld eternal truths. Blake believed that the truth would be revealed through the power of the Imagination while the founders of religion believe that the Creator speaks and reveals His eternal truths, but finally as St. Martin says, "all mystics speak the same language, for they come from the same country."⁹¹ Blake, like Zoroaster, stood for a positive, active truth opposing and fighting the Lie, both stood for human dignity and offered hope for the future. No religion has been as strongly opposed to all forms of asceticism and monasticism than the Zoroastrian faith and Blake too rejected the usual mystic formula of the ascetic-- for he refused to believe that the way to salvation lay through denying and destroying the mind or the flesh. Like the ancient Prophet of Iran Blake preached a gospel of life and a gospel of joy. In Zoroastrianism it is man's duty to marry and raise children, virtue is synonymous with fruitfulness vice with sterility and therefore celibacy is both wicked and unnatural. The fruitfulness and natural beauty of creation are celebrated by both Zoroaster and Blake, and while both believe that the normal life heightened becomes the ideal, in Blake as in Zoroastrianism man's conduct alone is responsible for his salvation. Zoroaster's hymns were the beginning of the tradition of the Poet-Prophet, Blake followed that tradition to announce to his age hope in a re-birth or to use Zoroastrian terminology a renewal or Frashokereti, after which mankind will

inhabit a world in which he once again thoroughly belongs.

At the heart of Zoroastrianism lies the doctrine of the inter-dependence and unity of the good creation. Once Evil is overcome, all will be synthesized again. Romantic philosophy too aims at, "primarily a metaphysics of integration, of which the key principle is that of the reconciliation or synthesis, of whatever is divided, opposed and conflicting."⁹² Mankind has always been seeking unity and coherence--Zoroaster was among the first to try and provide answers, to strive for integration. Centuries later Blake too in his poetry sought the reintegration of man, after the annihilation of the doubts and divisions of this earth. It is true that Blake drew upon various systems, and from every source known to him, but even though there are many contradictions in his work--his art, poetry and philosophy all follow one clear line, that of the sacred tradition.

The exact attribution of some of Blake's sources may be occasionally difficult, especially because traditional symbolism repeats itself at all times and in all authors who subscribe to that school of thought, but there are some symbols, ideas and visual images so precisely Zoroastrian that one cannot doubt that they were intended to evoke that particular body of knowledge. In the twentieth-century Yeats would write that "Supreme art is a traditional statement of certain heroic and religious truths, passed on from age to age, modified by individual genius but never abandoned."⁹³ Like Blake, Yeats too was following the stream of sacred knowledge. From Bronze Age Persia to eighteenth century England to our own modern world the message of unity that the sacred truths carry gives hope for a true cultural universalism.

Notes

- ¹ Jean H. Hagstrum, *William Blake: Poet and Painter: An Introduction to the Illuminated Work* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 109.
- ² See The Count Goblet D'Alviella, *The Migration of Symbols* (1894; rpt. New York: University Books, 1956). Kathleen Raine, "Introduction" to *William Blake: Poems and Prophecies* ed., Max Plowman, (London and New York: Dent and Dutton, Everyman's Library, 1975), p. xx.
- ³ Isaiah Berlin, Preface in H.G. Schenk, *The Mind of the European Romantics: An Essay in Cultural History* (Oxford, New York, Toronto, Melbourne: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), p. xvi.
- ⁴ S.T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*: Vol.1, ed. J. Shawcross (1817; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 98.
- ⁵ M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1971), pp. 171-72.
- ⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, World Perspective Series (1963 rpt. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964), p. 19.
- ⁷ Desiree Hirst, *Hidden Riches: Traditional Symbolism from the Renaissance to Blake* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964), p. 20.
- ⁸ Edward B. Hungerford, *Shores of Darkness* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1941), p. 13.
- ⁹ Jacob Bryant, *A New System or an Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, III Vols.

(London: Printed for T. Payne-Mews gate, P-Elmsly-Strand, B-White Fleet Street, J. Walter-Charing Cross), MDCCLXXIV-VI. Further discussion of Bryant's book in the following chapters will reveal the full extent of the influence this work had on Blake from a very early period of his life.

¹⁰ See Raine, "Introduction" to Plowman's, *William Blake*, p. xxi.

¹¹ Hirst, pp. 16-17. For Blake's Hindu links see Piloo Nanavutty in Vivian de Sola Pinto ed., *The Divine Vision: Studies in the Poetry & Art of William Blake* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1957), pp. 165-182.

¹² Frederick Tatham, in *The Letters of William Blake: Together with a Life by Frederick Tatham*, from the original manuscript, ed., Archibald G.B. Russell (London: Methuen & Co., 1906), p. 32.

¹³ G.E. Bentley Jr., and Martin K. Nuimi, *A Blake Bibliography: Annotated Lists of Works, Studies and Blakeana* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1964), p. 42.

¹⁴ David V. Erdman, *Blake. Prophet Against Empire: A Poet's Interpretation of the History of His Own Times* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1954), p. 31.

¹⁵ Geoffrey Keynes, *Blake Studies: Notes on His Life and Works in Seventeen Chapters* (London: Rupert Hart Davis, 1949), pp. 44-45

¹⁶ W.B. Yeats, "A Coat" quoted by Mark Schorer, *William Blake: The Politics of Vision* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), p. 26

¹⁷ Stewart Crehan, *Blake in Context* (Dublin & New Jersey: Gill & Macmillan &

Humanities Press, 1984), p. 52.

¹⁸ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978; rpt. London & Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 51.

¹⁹ Said, pp. 42-43.

²⁰ Thomas Hyde, *Veterum Persarum et Parthorum et Medorum Religionis Historia*, Editio Secunda, Oxonii, E. Typographeo Clarendoniano MDCCLX.

²¹ Raymond Schwab in *Vie d'Anquetil-Duperron Suivie des usages civils et religieux des Perses par Anquetil-Duperron* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1934), quoted by Said, p. 77.

²² Said, pp. 83-84. The full title of Napoleon's remarkable collection was *Description de L'Egypte, ou Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites in Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française publié par les ordres de sa majeste l'empereur Napoleon le grand*.

²³ Arthur F.J. Remy, "The Influence of India and Persia on the Poetry of Germany," *Columbia University Germanic Studies*, Vol. I, No. 4, (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1901), p. 10.

²⁴ Remy, p. 13.

²⁵ Schlegel, quoted by Said, p. 98.

²⁶ Goethe's Statement, and Poem *Hegire*. Translated and quoted by Said, p. 167.

²⁷ Goethe, "*Parsi-nameh*" This discussion is based on a lecture delivered on

23rd Nov. 1914 by Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, recorded in J.J. Modi, "Goethe's *Parsi-nameh* or *Buch des Parsen* i.e. The Book of the Parsees." See *Asiatic Papers Part II Papers Read Before the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Bombay: Times of India Press, 1917), p. 148.

²⁸ H.G. Schenk, p. 197.

²⁹ M. Bailly, *The Ancient History of Asia and Remarks on The Atlantis of Plato to which are Added Observations on the Learning of the Ancient Brahmans; in a series of Letters addressed to M. De Voltaire*. 2 vols (London: J. Coxhead, 1814).

³⁰ J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *The Western Response to Zoroaster* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), pp. 14-15.

³¹ Gerard de Nerval, author of *Voyage en Orient* Writing to Theophile Gautier, August 1843. Quoted by Said, pp. 100-01.

³² Goethe *Memoirs*, quoted by J.J. Modi, "Goethe's *Parsi-nameh*," pp. 128-29.

³³ In a lecture on "English Romantic Poets and Orientalism," organised by The Sahitya Akademi and The Oxford and Cambridge Society of Delhi at Delhi on 11th September 1986, Professor Marilyn Butler, Regius Professor of English Literature at Cambridge University traced the story of the romance of the English Romantic poets with Hindu and Zoroastrian mythology. Making a study of the Romantic poets between 1780 - 1820, she said that in the cultural interaction of the time western culture took from the East what it could use in a particular way, at a particular time. There was excitement at the "discovery" of Hinduisim which, as opposed to the male dominated monotheist Christian religion, seemed to offer a more open sexuality. However it was later felt that

the social behaviour of the Hindus was open to criticism and poets turned to Zoroastrianism for inspiration. Zoroastrianism became the favourite religion of the radicals for it seemed a religion with no stranglehold of priests. While mentioning among others Thomas Love Peacock, Landor, Southey, Shelley and Byron she felt that this cultural interpenetration was a living, changing phenomena not a single set response. Professor Butler was at that time working on a book *Poets and Myths* which would discuss these ideas in detail. All efforts to see a copy of this book have failed but it will surely throw a great deal of light on Romantic poets other than Blake who were also attracted by Zoroastrianism.

³⁴ Thomas Moore, "Lalla Rookh," was first published in 1817.

³⁵ Moore, in C.H. Herford, *The Age of Wordsworth* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1914), p. 203.

³⁶ Bernard Picart, *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of The Idolatrous Nations Together with Historical Annotations and Several Curious Discourses Equally Instructive and Entertaining*, written in French, illustrated with Folio Copper Plates, engraved by most of the Best hands in Europe. Translated into English by a Gentleman (London: Printed by William Jackson for Claude du Bosc, MDCCXXXIII).

³⁷ Southey quoted in Hereford, p. 206.

³⁸ Hereford, p. 203.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁴⁰ See J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *The Western Response to Zoroaster*, pp. 15-16.

⁴¹ Shelley, *The Political Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* ed. Dr. Richard Garnett

(London & Melbourne: Ward, Lock & Co., n.d), p. 165. Byron, *Byron: Poetical Works*, ed. Frederick Page. A New Edition, corrected by John Jump (1970; rpt. Oxford, N. York, Toronto, Melbourne: Oxford Univ. Press) 1979, pp. 453-492.

⁴² Nietzsche says in *Ecce Homo*:

I have not been asked, I should have been asked what the name Zarathushtra means in *my* mouth, in the mouth of the first Immoralist: for what makes up the enormous uniqueness of that Persian in history is exactly the opposite of it. Zarathushtra was the first who saw in the battle of good and evil the very wheel in the course of things: translating morals into metaphysics, as power, origin, aim in itself, such is his work.

Quoted by J. Duchesne-Guilenin, *Western Response*, pp. 21-22.

⁴³ Sir William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones, In Six Volumes*, Vol. I (London: Printed for G.G. & J. Robinson: Paternoster Row & R.H. Evans, successor to Mr. Edwards, No. 26, Pall-Mall, MDCCXCIX), p. 87.

⁴⁴ Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London, Boston, Henley; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 1.

⁴⁵ Alexanders' sack of Persepolis occurred in 330 B.C., that would date Zoroaster at 588 B.C. Working on this theory and that, according to tradition, he lived for 77 years these dates are calculated. See R.C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961), p. 33.

⁴⁶ H.E. Eduljee, "The Date of Zoroaster," *Journal of The K.R. Cama Oriental Institute*, No. 48 (Bombay: 1980), p. 104.

⁴⁷ Eduljee, pp. 107-146. The dating of Zoroaster is based on internal and

linguistic evidence. There is a marked closeness of style and metre between the *Rig Veda* and the *Gathas*. Thus the period of composition of these two early Indo-European sets of hymns cannot be separated by as vast a distance in time as a thousand years. While the date of the *Rig-Veda* is also subject to controversy, its earliest possible dates are between 5000 B.C. and 4500 B.C. not earlier. Evidence of the tenor of the *Avesta* and the picture of the cultural life of its people, also places the date between the second and third quarter of the second millenium B.C.

⁴⁸ Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, pp. 2 & 18.

⁴⁹ A.V. Williams Jackson, *Zoroaster: The Prophet of Ancient Iran* (London: Macmillan, for New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1899), p. 14.

⁵⁰ I.J.S. Taraporewala, *The Religion of Zarathustra* (rpt. Bombay: B.I. Taraporewala, 1980), p. 12.

⁵¹ Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, p. 3.

⁵² Boyce, quoting the *Zadspram*, *Zoroastrians*, p. 19.

⁵³ Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, *The Hymns of Zarathustra: Being a Translation of the Gathas together with Introduction and Commentary*, trans. from the French by Ms. M. Henning (London: John Murray, 1952), p. 137.

⁵⁴ Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, trans. *Gathas*, p. 75.

⁵⁵ Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, p. 33.

⁵⁶ *Yasht* 13.99-100, quoted by Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism: Vol. I: The Early Period* (Leiden/Koln: E.J. Brill, 1975), p. 187.

- ⁵⁷ Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. I, p. 191.
- ⁵⁸ I.J.S. Taraporewala, *The Religion of Zarathustra*, pp. 16-22.
- ⁵⁹ Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, trans. *Gathas*, p. 105.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, *Yasna*, 31-7, p. 111.
- ⁶¹ Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism* I, pp. 192-94. Manekji Nusservanji Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Theology: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New York: n.p. 1914), pp. 47-48.
- ⁶² Taraporewala, *Religion of Zarathustra*, p. 29.
- ⁶³ Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, trans., *Gathas*, p. 103.
- ⁶⁴ Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Theology*, p. 14.
- ⁶⁵ Taraporewala, *Religion of Zarathustra*, p. 33.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- ⁶⁷ Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religion Beliefs and Practices*, p. 143.
- ⁶⁸ Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, p. 45.
- ⁶⁹ Dastur Framroze A. Bode, *Man, Soul, Immortality in Zoroastrianism* (Bombay: n.p. 1960), p. 9. This book is a reprint of four lectures, delivered as Government Research Fellowship Lecturer of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, January-February 1958.
- ⁷⁰ Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, pp. 25.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷³ Yasht 19.16-18, *Zadspram* XXXV, ed. Behrampore T. Anklesaria, quoted in Boyce *History of Zoroastrianism*, I, p. 203.

⁷⁴ Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, I, p. 211.

⁷⁵ Translated as such by Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, I p. 203, and Dhalla *Zoroastrian Theology*, p. 36.

⁷⁶ Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Theology*, p. 42.

⁷⁷ Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, p. 29.

⁷⁸ *Bundahis* Ch.XXX-20 in Max Muller, ed., E.W. West trans., *The Sacred Books of the East: V Pahlavi Texts: Part I, The Bundahis-Bahman Yast Shayast La-Shavast* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1880; rpt. Delhi: Unesco Collection of Representative Works, printed by Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), p. 126. Hereafter this series is referred to as SBE.

⁷⁹ *Yasht* XXII, 9-14, in Max Muller ed., James Darmesteter trans., SBE Vol. XXIII, *The Zend Avesta: Part II: The Sirozaks, Yasts and Nyayis* (Oxford Univ. Press; 1884; rpt. Delhi; Varanasi, Patna: Unesco Collection of Representative Works, printed by Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), p. 317.

⁸⁰ Maneckji Nusservanji Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1938; rpt. Bombay: The K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, 1963), p. 237. For details regarding the various parts of a human being see Daster Framroze A. Bode & Piloo

Nanavutty, *Songs of Zarathustra: The Gathas* (London: George Allen Unwin, 1952), pp. 112-113. According to *Yasna* 55.1, the human body is made up of nine parts, three purely material, three a mixture of material and the subtle, three purely spiritual. Under (a) *Purely material* we see

(1) Gaethaeo - The Primal Element

(2) Tanvas - The physique or person.

(3) Astavant - The bony substance, flesh, blood, tissues.

(h) *Mixture of Material and Subtle*

(1) Ushtana - The life Breath

(2) Kehrfa - The form, or subtle body beneath the covering of flesh

(3) Tevishi - The Desire for perfection, the upward striving faculty in man.

(c) *Spiritual*

(1) Baodha - The Discerning Intellect

(2) Urvana - The soul

(3) Fravashi - The pure spiritual essence in man. The soul and intellect strive to unite with the Fravashi, a process which continues even after physical death. The Daena or Visionary Perception and Ahu, spiritual existence are two more purely spiritual faculties which bring the total parts of the human being to eleven.

⁸¹ *Yasna* XXIII-3, in Max Muller ed., L.H. Mills., trans., *SBE Vol. XXXI: The Zend Avesta: Part III: The Yasna, Visparad, Afrinagan Gahs and Miscellaneous*

Fragments (Oxford Univ. Press: 1887, rpt. Delhi, Varanasi, Patna: Unesco Collection of Representative Works, printed by Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), p. 273.

⁸² Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism* I, p. 129.

⁸³ Sir Rustom Masani, *The Religion of the Good Life: Zoroastrianism* (1983; rpt. London: George Allen & Unwin 1954), p. 173.

⁸⁴ Paul J. du Breuil, "Neo-Zoroastrian Philosophy and Spirituality," Government Fellowship Lectures rpt. in *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute*, No. 48 (Bombay 1980), pp. 45-46.

⁸⁵ Quoted by Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, p. 55.

⁸⁶ Taraporewala, *The Religion of Zarathustra*, p. 67.

⁸⁷ Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, p. 87.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁸⁹ James Hastings with John A. Selbie and Louis H. Gray, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics Vol. IX: Munda-Phrygians* (1917; rpt. Edinburgh & New York: T & T Clark & Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), pp. 642-45. The famous Parsi legend regarding the landing at Sanjan is that Jadi Rana, on being requested refuge by the Persians, signified his inability to accommodate them by presenting a bowl full of milk--for he wanted to tell them that his country was overflowing with people. The Persians called for some sugar and returned the bowl after adding a spoonful of sugar--signifying in return that, like the sugar, they would mingle and sweeten the milk without letting it overflow.

⁹⁰ James Darmesteter, "Parsi-ism: Its Place in History," A Lecture Delivered at Bombay (Bombay: "Voice of India" Press, 1887), pp. 11-12, 10-11.

⁹¹ St. Martin, quoted by Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (1911; rpt. Sixteenth edition, New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1948), p. 80.

⁹² M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 182.

⁹³ W.B. Yeats, quoted by Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition* Vol. I (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), "Introduction" p. xxxi.

Chapter - II

A Golden String: Blake's Sources of Zoroastrian Ideas

"I give you the end of a golden string . . ."

(Jerusalem IV: 7)

The Judaeo-Christian tradition and Greek thought the two great parent theologies of Western religious beliefs both borrowed considerably from the East, particularly from Persia. Gnosticism, an offshoot of these two system is also greatly indebted to Zoroastrianism. Judaism, Greek thought and the Gnostic heresies combined and surfaced in the various religious sects of eighteenth-century England while Blake's two acknowledged masters Boehme and Swedenborg were also exposed to these cross-currents. In many cases it is difficult to pinpoint exact borrowings; however these, Blake's known sources, all acknowledge their debt to Persian wisdom. These are the indirect sources through which knowledge of Zoroastrianism was available to Blake. Some have been studied in detail by Zoroastrian scholars, some are scarcely known. We can briefly trace each one in turn to pinpoint the Zoroastrian thread in their fabrics.

I

Blake's greatest indebtedness is to the Judaic-Christian tradition therefore we turn to it first. Although many early Christian scholars felt themselves almost honour bound not to acknowledge Judaeo-Christianity's debt to its neighbours in religious matters, the

Zoroastrian influence on the post-exilic Jewish religion is now seen as decisive, particularly after the discovery in the twentieth-century of the Dead Sea Scrolls.¹ The Rev. J.H. Moulton, in 1913, found it absurd having "to argue against the perversely ingenious people who write as if there was a complete set of Sacred Books of the East in Aramaic on the shelves of a public library in Nazareth or Capernaum,"² but when the Hebraic stay in Iran lasted more than thirteen centuries,³ it was impossible for either side to remain unaffected by cross-currents. Before the Babylonians destroyed the Jewish temple in the early sixth-century the Jews had been convinced of their sovereignty. However when their entire temple-based religion seemed at an end, spiritual doubts ensued along with physical suffering. The seed of their revival came from Persia where Cyrus the Great's rise to power was regarded by the Jewish exiles as a source of hope; he was even hailed by the Jewish Prophets as a Messiah.

Significantly Blake was familiar with those very prophets who proclaimed that the Persian King was the Lord's "anointed"⁴:

The Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them how they dared so roundly to assert that God spake to them. . . .

(Marriage, K., p. 153)

Blake's Ezekiel explains that:

The philosophy of the east taught the first principles of human perception: some nations held one principle for the origin, and some another; . . . [but] we so loved our God that we cursed in his name all the deities of surrounding nations, and asserted that they had rebelled.

(Marriage, K., p. 153)

Isaiah's praise of Cyrus, the "Messiah," is joined with what seems strangely

original theology, unfamiliar in the Jewish world but remarkably Zoroastrian in character. Mary Boyce quotes in *The History of Zoroastrianism* parallels drawn between Isaiah Chapter 2, and the *Gathas Yasna* 44. The very style of rhetorical questioning, and the sudden appearance of the cosmological framework, hitherto conspicuously neglected by the Prophets suggests a distinct relationship and, "given the time and circumstance, this tradition would appear to be the teachings of Zoroaster."⁵ Cyrus liberated the Jews, allowed them to return to Israel, gave them money to rebuild their temple, and Darius his successor finally completed its reconstruction.

This period of historical inter-relationship resulted in Iranian ideas entering the books of The Old Testament as well as influencing the esoteric Jewish writings. These ideas have been studied in detail by John Hinnells and Paul J. du Breuil. One of them is seen to be the development of the idea of Satan, who becomes the Hebraic copy of the Iranian Ahriman. The other ideas which show this influence are changes from the belief in the Jewish *Sheol* or future existence of souls after death, (which in the pre-exilic Bible as in the older Greek classics, was a dimly imagined state where decay continued) to the idea of heaven and hell which first entered Judaism with the Book of Daniel; the concept of the Universal Resurrection, the hope of a divine Saviour and ultimate salvation.⁶ Only after the exile the expectation of a King-Messiah, from the house of David, who would lead Israel in triumph changed to the more universal concept of the birth of a new world.⁷ To point to minor details, the seven Amesha-Spentas become the Seven Spirits at Ragha the Zoroastrian centre in *The Book of Tobit*, which also contains the name, Asmodeus, (Aeshmadaeva) an old Avesta demon of wrath.⁸

The ancient world knew Zoroaster's religion best by the name of the doctrine of the Magi. From the time of the earliest mention of Zoroastrianism made in Judaeo-Christian literature by the Prophet Jeremiah (XXXIX.3), to the time when the Magi or

Wise Men of The New Testament came to worship the Christ child at Bethlehem, we see that unlike other ancient faiths, the Zoroastrian faith was not regarded as diametrically opposed to the Mosaic. One of the last words of Christ, even when he was on the Cross was the Persian "paradise" (*pairi-daeza*) (Luke 23:43) which he promised his followers and the Christian tradition, borrowing the teachings of the Jews, tried to incorporate Zoroaster into their own mythology by identifying him with Ezekiel, Nimrod, Seth, Balaam and Baruch.⁹ All this seems to confirm the statement of St. Augustine:

The thing itself, which is now called the Christian religion, was with the ancients, and it was with the human race from its beginnings to the time when Christ appeared in the flesh: from when on the true religion, which already existed began to be called Christian.¹⁰

Turning to Judaism, we again see that from the very earliest times Jewish mysticism has had links with Zoroastrianism. Affinities between certain aspects of *The Gathas* and the Merkabah or Throne mysticism can be traced, while Metatron, the Angel of the Divine Presence resembles Sraosha. The Qadish portion of the Merkabah Hymns too have analogies with the hymns chanted by Zoroaster the aim of both being to praise the Lord and induce ecstasy.¹¹ The Jewish Kabbalah, literature which emerged during the Middle Ages, developed through many contacts with Gnosticism in the early centuries of the Christian era. The origin of the mystical doctrine concerning God and the mystery of Creation in *The Sefer Yetzirah* is seen by the Jewish historian Isidore Epstein to derive directly from Zoroastrian and Chaldean sources.¹²

The question which arises then is how far was Blake aware of such derivations?

While positive proof of the Zoroastrian contribution to the Judaeo-Christian tradition has come only in recent years a traditional belief in these connections has always existed. Volney, whose *Ruins of Empire* (1791) influenced an entire generation of English liberal thinkers and poets, thought very highly of Zoroastrianism and ascribed to Zoroastrian influence the beliefs that appear in post-exilic Judaism of the immortality of the soul, Hell, Paradise, and the birth of evil.¹³ Blake himself is very emphatic when he says:

That the Jews assumed a right Exclusively to the benefits of God will be
a lasting witness against them and the same will it be against [of: del.]
Christians.

(Annotations to Watson, K., p. 389)

Besides this, the Zoroastrian connection is stressed by other writers of the times. In Thomas Taylor's translation of Basnage's *History of the Jews*, which appeared in London in 1708, the Persian contribution to the Hebrew tradition is prominent for as he says, "There were two Academies in Persia for the dispersed Tribes . . . [they] share[d] the great events of the Persian Monarchy."¹⁴ Magic, the Kabbalah, Egyptian wisdom and Mithraism all combine in Basnage's book which also quotes freely from Hyde regarding Persian doctrine, and he says of the Zoroastrian book the "Sad-der" that it:

Begins in the name of God . . . who created the soul and the intellect . . . ,
of that God who made the Body and the soul, of that God who is the
Matter of our Existence and Life, of that God who is the only one in the
Universe.

Close links are found in Basnage between "Zoroaster" and Christianity and he concludes the Zoroastrian creation story thus:

... Zoroaster, had instructed the Magi that when they should see a Star appear, wherein they should observe the Image of a Virgin, they should take the Road to the Jews Paradise [sic], that is to say, to Jerusalem.

Finally, regarding the hereafter Basnage tells us that "This tenet was rather to be brought from Persia than any other place . . . The Persians had some notions of Heaven and Hell and the Jews might have taken these ideas from them, specially after the Conquest of Cyrus who was their deliverer."¹⁵

Another popular historian, Mosheim, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, when speaking of the doctrines of the Magi stresses that the concept of the two principles of good and evil was "propagated so widely that it had even infected the Jews themselves."¹⁶

Such textual evidence apart, it is an established fact that Blake had worked on the engravings of Flavius Josephus's *History of the Jews*. This evidently would have given him a knowledge of the Persian contribution to the Jewish tradition as he could not but have seen the plate of Cyrus rebuilding the temple, amongst other details of Jewish history.¹⁷

If, Yaweh being a jealous god, the Jews are reticent about their Persian links, the Greeks do not hesitate to acknowledge their interest in the ancient Persians. Blake's attitude towards the Greeks was always ambivalent but he closely studied their culture even claiming, "I read Greek as fluently as an Oxford scholar" (*Letters, K.*, p. 821). From the time of Herodotus, the father of history, who in his popular account of Persian customs makes the famous statement that the Persians "instruct their children . . . in three

subjects only, horsemanship, archery and truth telling,"¹⁸ the early Greeks, Ktesias, Deinon, Theopompos, Hermippos all wrote about the Persians. Knowledge of their works was preserved by the later Greeks, particularly Plutarch, Diogenes and Pliny. Theopompos's Eighth book of the history of King Philip of Macedonia entitled "On Miraculous Things" along with Hermippos's "On the Magi" were to become two chief sources from which the Greeks and Romans derived knowledge about Zoroastrianism. Pliny reports (*Historia Naturalis*, XXX.2) that the latter not only studied all the two million verses of the Zoroastrian books but stated the contents of each book separately.¹⁹

The Greek tradition which dated Zoroaster in distant pre-history, believed that Pythagoras had been tutored at Zoroaster's school in Babylon and saw Plato as a kind of re-incarnation of Zoroaster. Zoroaster's ideas even entered the Academy with disciples such as Eudoxus of Cnide. From the time of Plato to Plotinus Zoroastrian concepts were amalgamated with Greek thought particularly ideas of immortality, the soul, the dualism of the two opposed powers, heaven and hell, and the cosmic mixture. Platonic concepts such as the Sovereign Good and the archetypal Ideas too have been seen to have close Zoroastrian links.²⁰ The Zoroastrian reverence towards fire, water and the elements is mentioned repeatedly by the Greeks, while biographical details regarding Zoroaster's life are found in Pliny:

I have heard it said that only one human being has laughed on the day he was born, to wit, Zoroaster.

as also the belief

Zoroaster lived in the desert on cheese . . . for twenty years.²¹

Plutarch's *On Isis and Osiris* contains a brief yet full account of Zoroastrian doctrine believed to be taken from Hermippos. As it contains many ideas important for an understanding of Blake's work it is quoted here at length:

Now this is the opinion of the . . . wisest of men. Some believe there are two gods, . . . the one the Creator of good things, the other of evil things. Others call the better divinity, God, and the other, Daemon, as does Zoroaster the Magian, who they say lived five thousand years before the Trojan war. Now Zoroaster called the former Horomazes and the latter Arimanius; furthermore he showed that one was more like light than anything else apprehended by the senses, the other more like darkness and ignorance, and Mithras midway between the two; hence Mithras is known . . . as the Mediator. They regard some plants as belonging to the beneficent God and others to the evil daemon, some animals, such as dogs, birds . . . to the former but water animals to the latter . . . Horomazes and Arimanius, the one begotten of the purest light, the other of nether darkness, are at war with each other. The first created six Gods, the first of goodwill, the second of truth, the third of good laws and of the rest one as maker of wisdom, one of wealth and one of pleasure in fine things. And Arimanius created a similar number to be, as it were, rivals of these . . . Then Horomazes . . . decorated the heaven with stars. He also created twenty four other Gods and placed them in an egg. But the Gods who were created by Arimanius . . . bored a hole in the egg . . . whence evil has mingled with good. But the destined time will come, when Arimanius will bring a plague and famine and inevitably perish by them utterly and disappear; when the earth will become level and flat, and when all men will be happy and speak one tongue . . . in the end Hades is left behind, and mankind will be happy, neither needing food nor casting shadows; and that the God who brought this to pass is quiet and at rest for a time, on the whole not a long one for a god, but a reasonably long one for a man asleep.²²

It is hardly surprising that Blake seems to use aspects of this account in



Pt. 1 The flaming mountain from *Bryant*.

formulating his own mythology, for the accounts of the Greeks are quoted extensively by Blake's mentor Bryant, who supports them with several plates on the themes discussed by the Greek writers. A plate of a flaming mountain in Volume I of Bryant's works can be linked to the explanation given by Dion. Chrysostom in Volume II regarding Zoroaster's retreat to the mountain of "Adarbain," where he found enlightenment and even "when the mountain burned with fire, he was preserved unhurt." (See Plate - 1)²³

Among the Greek interpretations of Zoroastrianism, while Strabo's account of the Magi emphasises the reverence paid to fire Chrysostom explains in detail the comparison of the Universe with a chariot drawn by four horses in continual motion. On the other hand Damascius and Photius stress the principle of Time being the Universal cause, thereby coming close to the Zurvan heresy.²⁴ Altogether a very complete picture of the theology and rituals of Zoroastrianism had reached the West through these Greek authors, whose works were readily available to Blake not only through Bryant's writings but also in the other translations of the time.

Throughout the Classics Zoroaster, and the doctrines of the Magi were names to conjure with, and references and allusions, sometimes genuine often apocryphal, built up strands in the Western mystery tradition. The followers of Prodicus, the Sophist and contemporary of Socrates boasted of possessing the secret writings of Zoroaster,²⁵ and a number of purported books and "sayings" of Zoroaster are mentioned throughout Neoplatonic literature. A.V. Williams Jackson tells us that while the character of the titles recalls the analysis and summaries of the Zoroastrian *Nasks*, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact connections between these references and the extant Zoroastrian

texts.²⁶ The Chaldean Oracles of Zoroaster were part of this apocryphal mystery tradition, Plotinus being one of those who explained the "oracles." Porphyry however, in his study of the life of Plotinus, proves by a variety of arguments that they were a fabrication propagated to support recent theories by passing them off as the ancient wisdom of Zoroaster.²⁷

The link between the Neoplatonist Porphyry and William Blake is Thomas Taylor. Flaxman and Blake were contemporaries of Taylor and probably close friends sharing similar ideas and interests. Blake's indebtedness to Taylor in formulating his mythology has been studied in detail by Kathleen Raine, who also reveals the importance Blake gave to the discussion on the Cave of the Nymphs.²⁸ *De Antro Nympharum* was illustrated by Blake in the Arlington Court tempera painting and it is worth noting that Porphyry expressly, though not very accurately, attributes much of the allegory of the descent of the Soul to Persian and Mithraic sources:

The Persians, mystically signifying the descent of the soul into the sublunary region . . . initiate the mystic in a place they denominate a cavern . . . a cave, according to Zoroaster, bearing a resemblance of the world.²⁹

The Zoroastrian contraries have a parallel in the two-fold structure of the Neoplatonic gates of descent and ascent. According to Homer

Two urns by Jove's high Throne have ever stood
The source of evil one, and one of good. (*Illiad* XXIV, 1.527)

This is explained in Neoplatonic terms by Thomas Taylor who says that "every twofold division is a symbol of nature."³⁰

The two-fold structure is, as we see, used frequently in the Neoplatonic tradition but whereas the neoplatonist myth stresses the "filth" and "mire"³¹ of the generated world, it is important to note that Blake's positive approach to God's good creation is far closer to the Zoroastrian original. Taylor's five volume edition of Plato's *Works* was the first complete one in English,³² and it is most likely that Blake's understanding of Platonism was shaped by Taylor's pessimistic slant regarding matter, the generated body and the unreality of the physical world. Although Blake could write that "The natural Body is an Obstruction to the Soul" (*K.*, p. 775) he departs from the Neoplatonic tradition in that the worst crime in his world is repression of the senses and negating the joys of existence. For him "the Four Senses are The Four Faces of Man and the Four Rivers of the Water of Life" (*K.*, p. 773). Blake's occasional derogation of the "body" seems to be a more symbolic rejection of materialistic values than a near total acceptance of the neoplatonic attitude. Similarly, though Blake was greatly influenced by the Theory of Forms the neoplatonic concept of an ultimate all-encompassing Form, "One Fountain"³³ into which all dissolved, was opposed to his belief in the individuality of man. Zoroastrianism could provide him with an example by which the hereafter was not the loss of the many in the One, but the existence of the Many as one. Undoubtedly Blake has drawn a great deal from the Neoplatonic tradition of the transitory nature of this life but his essential departures from Neoplatonism are Blake's links with the older tradition, for while the one disdained life, the other gloried in it, though constantly stressing that there was something higher and better towards which all life should aspire. As in Zoroastrianism, the phenomena of this material earth revealed symbolic truths to Blake:

And every Natural Effect has a Spiritual Cause

(*Milton*, 1.44, *Keynes*, p. 513)

It is this concept, which entered Blake's writings in the late eighties that leads G.M. Harper to raise an important issue:

During the years between 1784 and the first Prophetic Books, something happened to Blake's thinking which must be recognized if we are to see these strangely different poems in proper perspective. He was certainly preoccupied with reviving the 'Lost Art of the Greeks' . . . however this concern was part of a concerted movement, the roots of which in view of the paucity of biographical information are hard indeed to trace. The sources of the movement were certainly multiple and not always immediately recognized. At any rate, the new aesthetic is based upon a cosmological symbolism which emphasized the correspondence between celestial values and earthly objects and which was capable of imaginative apprehension by the artistic consciousness, because it had come into the world 'like a garden ready Planted and Sown'.³⁴

While G.M. Harper finds the roots of this "hard to trace," this "new aesthetic" can be explained in relation to Zoroastrian thought. Taylor and the Neoplatonists had started Blake off in a particular direction and even mentioned links and sources. For Blake, already aware of the Persian tradition from his apprentice days the connection with the ancient cosmic system of the Persians would not be difficult to establish.

Besides Neoplatonism the Western world's knowledge of the esoteric tradition also came from Gnosticism, a term loosely applied to a wide ranging body of knowledge spread out across countries and centuries. Kenneth Rexroth in a "Primer" of Gnosticism attributes tremendous importance to two "culture clashes" in the history of religion, the first being the Persian conquest of Syria, Palestine and Egypt and the second being

Alexander's conquest of Persia. Emphasising the Persian connections, to the first he attributes the birth of Judaism and to the second the growth of Christianity.³⁵ To trace the reasons for his statement would be to see the effect of Persian ideas on the doctrines of the Gnostics.

Who were the Gnostics and why are they so important in a consideration of Blake? They were those who, many centuries earlier, like Blake had sought *gnosis* or true wisdom and made the holy things of life their study. The Church fathers saw them as arch heretics, blending Plato and Pythagoras with secret mysteries and strange faiths. The Gnostics observed rites and doctrines which are today regarded as occult; yet it is they who preserved many traditions from the recesses of mankind's earliest spiritual inheritance. Christianity too has inherited a great deal of its symbolism from the Gnostics.

From Persia, the Gnostics imbibed the concept of the Universe as a moral battleground. This symbolism of the struggle of light against darkness would influence all later western philosophy. The Gnostics also brought into Western consciousness the Zoroastrian concept of Creation and Redemption as a cosmic drama in which man is the main focus, the most important actor. As Gnosticism died out, its place was occupied by a direct Zoroastrian heresy--Manichaeism, from which came a large number of Christian heresies. Jacob Boehme was directly influenced by the metaphysics of light and dark and much of Gnostic mythology survived as an undercurrent to emerge in the great revival of the occult in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in sects with which Blake was directly involved.³⁶

While Gnosticism has been called the "acute secularising of Christianity,"³⁷ in reality the Gnosis was actually pre-Christian. Christ's teachings illuminated and

explained many of the mysteries for the common man, but the inner meaning could only come to the spiritually highest clan, the pneumatics, those who could look beyond ethics and parables to the true gnosis. G.R.S. Mead sees Mainandros, Menander of Antioch, as one of the earliest links in the chain between Gnosticism and the Magian doctrine. The Gnostics traced the tradition of their aeon-lore to this disciple of the Magi, for the root of their aeonology specially the Valentinian Pleroma or Fullness of Spiritual Being with the Thirty Aeons or divinities is to be found in the Zoroastrian concept of the Amesha Spentas or emanations of Ahura Mazda and his Thirty Yazatas.³⁸ Another example of such influence is "Simon Magus" whose name immediately suggests the links between the Samaritan wonder-worker and his Persian tradition. The Simonian gnostic system uses fire symbolism which confirms this belief:

The Fire which is above the heavens is the Treasure house, as it were a great tree from which all flesh is nourished.³⁹

The fruit of the Fire-Tree and the "Flower of Fire" are symbols of immortal man, the gathered spiritual consciousness of the "man-plant," all of which appears to be very reminiscent of Zoroastrianism. The Basilidian gnosis set great store by Oriental writings which scholars feel were a cycle of Zoroastrian literature now lost but in great favour among Gnostic communities, while the doctrine of purity stressed in Jewish Gnosticism, and particularly the Essenes, represents the mainstream of Persian influence on the most learned and pure Jews.⁴⁰ Even the names of the aeons of the famous Sophia myth, the despair of many philologists, are seen as attempts to translate the original Zoroastrian terms of Ahura-Mazda and the Ameshaspands.⁴¹

Alexandria was the great centre of Gnosticism where Jewish Monotheism, Babylonian astrology and Iranian dualism were all interwoven into the fabric of

Hellenism. The Gnostic systems absorbed and propagated it all. If we look beyond the Christian heresy to Eastern Gnosticism what is particularly important with regard to Zoroastrianism is the mystery cult of Mithra and Manichaeism.

Mithra was an Aryan deity, the Lord of Light, both in the *Avesta* and in the Hindu Vedic hymns. The sun was his physical vehicle, he was all-seeing and always alert; since none could deceive him he became the Lord of Truth and loyalty, the guarantor of all promises and contracts. In later Avestan literature Mithra became a Judge of the departed souls and "Lord of Wide pastures."⁴² In this fashion he began representing a father-figure aspect of nature becoming, along with the goddess Anahita, the patron of love and fecundity. The Mithraic cult was to become most popular throughout Asia Minor and spread its influence to Greece and Rome. Mithraism spread primarily through Roman legionaries who regarded him as an invincible warrior or Sol Invictus.⁴³ Numerous sanctuaries to the deity can be found across Europe and along with the occult lore of Zoroaster, this formed a strong Persian influence throughout the Roman Empire.

The supreme godhead of Mithraism was Kronos--Time, the Zurvana Akarana or Boundless Time, of the Avestan texts. The Zurvanite manifestation of the Persian faith (which will be seen in some detail in Chapter Five), was the best known aspect of the Zoroastrian religion in the West. Zurvan in sculpture was represented as a lion-headed human monster with a serpent encircling his body. He held the sceptre of sovereignty and each hand had a key to the gates of heaven. He was the First Cause, Creator and Destroyer. In the Zurvan myth both Ohrmazd and Ahriman were believed to be twins, born of Boundless Time, and the material world created when Mithra combated the primeval Bull, whom he finally killed to create and save mankind. The myth tells us that the seed of this Bull was gathered and purified by the Moon and from it all animal creation emerged. Ahriman the evil one tried to kill the first human couple and later

called down a universal deluge. One man, forewarned, was saved with his cattle and finally after a great conflagration, the good Creation restored. Mithra's work completed, he retired to the heavens where he guards the world from above. Mithraic sanctuaries were to be found in caves and grottoes where fires burnt perpetually on the altars while Greek art spread the cult of Mithra particularly his act of immolating the Bull. Mithraism also believed in Seven Heavens, one above the other joined by a ladder which enabled the pious souls to rise till the last abode of light and beatitude.⁴⁴ These visual ideas from Mithraism spread throughout Europe influencing many generations of artists. Mithraism gradually faded with the advent of Christianity but it reappeared in the cult of Mani where Mazda worship blended with elements of Christianity and Buddhism.

Mani (216-275 A.D.) the arch-heretic of the Sasanian period, founded a cult which like Mithraism spread far from the home of its origin and penetrated the West disguised as a heretical sect of Christianity. St. Augustine was brought up in this faith before his conversion to Christianity and in Italy it appeared as the Cathar heresy. The last record of this religion can be found among the Albigensians in Southern France.⁴⁵ Although Mani was vehemently attacked by the Pahlavi writers as evil, his fundamental concern, like Zoroastrianism's is the problem of the battle between good and evil. He advocates the existence of the Twin principles, Light for him being Spirit and "good," Darkness, Matter and "evil." The cosmogony has Zoroastrian traits too for it is divided into three ages, the first when the two Principles were totally separated, the second when darkness invaded light resulting in universal conflict and the final consummation of the third age which will again see the triumph of Light and the complete separation of the two Principles.

In the light of Zoroastrianism Mani is a heretic because of his basic pessimism. For him, since all matter is evil, the material creation is tainted; and when mortification

of the body becomes a virtue, all comforts and pleasures are to be abhorred. In contrast Zoroastrianism provides for both the material and spiritual side of man. Purity of body contributes to purity of spirit and Mani's greatest virtue, that of celibacy, is totally opposed to the Zoroastrian emphasis on marriage and the rearing of children. Mani's doctrine of poverty too is opposed to the Persian doctrine of plenty. Despite its negations Mani's was, as Hans Jonas puts it, "The only gnostic system which became a broad historical force"⁴⁶ and for some time Manichaeism seemed to become a rival to the Catholic Church. Manichaeism was well-known in Blake's lifetime and Robinson's Small Diary records Blake's interest in Mani's doctrines:

We spoke of the Devil and I observed that When a child I thought the Manichaeon doctrine or that of the Two principles a rational one. He assented to this.⁴⁷

It is thus indisputable that Iranian notions entered the Gnostic speculations both in broad, general ideas as well as in particulars. The latter can be seen in the famous *Song of the Pearl* from the Syriac *Acts of Thomas* where the soul's search for perception and its attainment is found in a text representative both of gnosis and of Manichaen piety.⁴⁸ Thus, besides Neoplatonism, the gnostic stream of the esoteric Western tradition too was directly influenced by Persia and its faith.

These teachings of the past came closest to Blake through two figures whose personal interpretations of earlier doctrines would influence and later lead to the poet's own intellectual development. The first such figure was Jacob Boehme who

"appear'd"(K., p. 799) to Blake and came to influence much of his poetry. Often seen as a mystic whose literary compositions were examples of inspired, automatic writing, Boehme had been exposed to the teachings of the great medieval mystics and the Church Fathers through Martin Moller, his pastor at Gorlitz. Gorlitz had become after 1580 a centre of what was called "alchemy" based greatly on the teachings of Paracelsus,⁴⁹ and here Boehme was made aware of many varieties of esoteric thought. Blake possessed Boehme's writings in his own personal library⁵⁰ and obviously studied his ideas carefully.

As it is little known, from the point of view of this study it is essential to stress that even in the "Introduction" to the Law edition of *The Works* Boehme seems to be echoing Zoroastrian ideas. His emphasis on Fire, light, the dualities of good and Evil can be understood in the light of his own statement:

This Author, *Jacob Behmen* . . . acknowledges to have received a higher gift from God . . . left in writing, for the good of those that should live after him . . . he has discovered . . . such Principles as . . . lead to the attaining of the highest powerful natural wisdom, such as was among the Philosophers, *Hermes Trismegistus*, *Zoroaster*, *Pythagoras* . . . and other deep men. These Principles lead to the attaining of such wisdom as was taught in Babylon among the *Caldeans*, *Astrologians* and wisemen or *Magi* among whom Daniel was educated and to that wisdom of the East, from whence came the *Magi* who saw the star that, led them to Jerusalem and to Bethlehem.⁵¹

While the illustrations to Law's translation reflect Persian symbols and stress fire and flames, the words often echo Zoroastrian concepts, e.g. "Doubt is the Devil's weapon".⁵² Like Blake, Boehme wondered "Why did God suffer Lucifer's Evil spirit,"⁵³ and both stress that "Most certainly there is but one God: when the veil is put away, thou

wilt know all thy Brethren." Yet Boehme differs from Blake and Zoroastrianism in predicting an eternal Hell where "a hellish stink will burn and the hellish Fire and hellish Coldness and Bitterness will burn."⁵⁴ In contrast with his belief in eternal damnation is his very Zoroastrian prediction of the end of the world:

There is yet a wonderful time near at hand, which shall change all, many great mountains and Hills shall be made plain, and a Fountain shall flow out of Zion, wherein the afflicted shall drink and be refreshed.⁵⁵

Blake was very definite as to his own attitudes regarding a Hell of everlasting torment, "I do not believe there is such a thing literally" (*Lavater* 309, K., p. 74), but in Zoroastrianism, Boehme and Blake the contrary states are essential to creation for without the contraries there is no life. Boehme explains his concept of duality in *Mysterium Magnum*:

The Power in the light is God's love-fire and the power in the Darkness is the Fire of God's Anger; and yet it is but one only Fire, but divided into Two Principles that the one might be manifest in the other.⁵⁶

The Zurvan myth seems to be the influence behind Boehme's statement regarding the birth of good and evil; "Therefore was born at *once* in one womb an evil and a good man,"⁵⁷ and Boehme's Seven Spirits of God also follow the role given to the Amesha Spentas:

And out of and from the same Body of the Seven Spirits of God, are all Things made . . . The Heaven, the Earth, the stars, the elements, men, Beasts, Fowls, Fishes, all works, wood, Trees, also stones, Herbs and grass and all whatsoever is.⁵⁸

Another startlingly Zoroastrian concept in Boehme's *Preface to The Three-Fold Life of*

Man is that besides good and evil, there is a "third life . . . and it is called Time."⁵⁹ Here he is directly echoing the Zurvan story. However while Boehme attributes to the Magi his knowledge "of how things are come to be"⁶⁰ he differs from Zoroastrianism and Blake in his belief that "a Beast has no eternal spirit,"⁶¹ a statement which reflects Christian orthodoxy and is a far cry from Blake's very Zoroastrian:

A dog starv'd at his Master's Gate
 Predicts the ruin of the State
 . . . Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly
 For the last Judgment draweth nigh.

(*Auguries of Innocence*, K., pp. 431-32)

Boehme's concepts are very important in a study of Blake because initially the poet seemed to formulate his answers to the riddle of good and evil through his interpretation of the German shoemaker. If God is good then all that proceeds from Him must be so, therefore Hell became a Life Force and in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake used Good and Evil, Heaven and Hell as technical terms without imposing any morality on them. However his concept of Hell underwent a change, evil became a quality springing from error, something which must acquire a definite form in order to be ultimately cast out, and Hell a place "Where sin and death are to be closed Eternally" (*Vision of the Last Judgment*, K., p. 608). In this manner Blake seems to travel beyond Boehme's world view, and as he did in the case of Neoplatonism he again comes closer to original Zoroastrian teachings.

While Boehme seems to use ideas directly from Zoroastrian texts, Swedenborg, the other great influence on Blake, also stresses that true wisdom came from the East particularly from the Magi:

... There was an ancient Word extant in the world, particularly in Asia, previous to the Word which was given to the children of Israel . . . They had knowledge of a Paradise, of a Flood, of the Sacredness of Fire, of Four ages. . . . They who were acquainted with the correspondence of that Word were called Wise men and intelligent and in succeeding ages . . . Magi.⁶²

Giving credit for his Theory of Correspondences to these "Ancients" who had acquired "the knowledge of Angels," Swedenborg give us his theory in words that clearly link it with Zoroastrian cosmology:

The whole natural world corresponds to the spiritual world, both in the whole and likewise in its several parts; and what exists and subsists in the natural from the spiritual is called Correspondence . . . A man is an image both of heaven and of this world . . . he stands here both in the spiritual and natural world . . . nature was created on purpose to serve for outward exhibition of what is spiritual.⁶³

Blake had become deeply interested in Swedenborg and owned copies of *Heaven and Hell* and *Divine Love and Divine Wisdom*. Although he never joined the New Church he attended meetings held by Swedenborgian disciples and was present at the General Conference of the New Church in April 1789.⁶⁴ In these circles, books and ideas were subject to perpetual discussion thereby exposing Blake to currents of thought hitherto hidden. Denis Saurat is correct when he says that this also led to Blake studying all the absurdities of thought (and there were plenty), prevailing in Europe at the end of the eighteenth-century,⁶⁵ but because of his knowledge of the fragments of various

traditions, Blake could interpret, fuse and create his own system of mythology, going beyond his masters. Swedenborg taught Blake that the Bible was to be interpreted spiritually, not literally for in this material world objects were symbols of higher truth, and words like all else in nature had an internal or spiritual meaning. This led to Blake's assertion that, "There Exist in the Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing we see reflected in this Vegetable glass of nature" (*Vision of the Last Judgment, Notebook, K.*, pp. 69-70), an idea that repeatedly appears in the Prophetic Books.

Blake passed through a vehemently anti-Swedenborgian period before he came to see in perspective his indebtedness to Swedenborg for many of his ideas, but two aspects he could not agree with were Swedenborg's predestinarianism and the importance the latter gave to the rational faculty. For Blake the perception of spiritual truths lay outside the field of reason. Nevertheless it was by extending Swedenborg's system of correspondences that Blake came to the conclusion that "Human nature is the image of God" (*Lavater, K.*, p. 83).

If Boehme and Swedenborg were sometimes uncertain regarding doctrine, Blake's own theory of the world is also confused for while he believed that the soul was existent in eternity his attitude towards the body was ambivalent, even contradictory. He could express the very Zoroastrian, "Man has no Body distinct from the Soul; for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the Five senses" (*Marriage, K.*, p. 149), but he also said that "The natural Body is an Obstruction to the Soul or Spiritual Body" (*Berkeley, K.*, p. 775). However, unlike the mystics of the Christian tradition, Blake refused to condemn the body and its instincts, and while Swedenborg equates evil with reactions against God and the good, there is difference in the two men's attitude towards the clash of contraries. For Blake, human life can be transformed only by this struggle, evil is

negation, repression and restraint, it has to be fought by good which is positive and creative. This Blakean idea of the world as a moral battleground where only positive action can triumph over the evil of inaction is again a development of the idea of contraries much closer to original Zoroastrian theology than to its interpretation by the occultists.

Besides these particular instances, mystical and occult literature had a widespread following throughout England from the second half of the seventeenth-century. If Boehme was seen as a Protestant mystic, Catholic mystics such as St. John of The Cross and St. Teresa of Avila were widely read. The Hermetic literature of the early centuries had been translated by Dr. Everard⁶⁶ and Alchemical writings were very popular. Apart from William Law others such as Richard Clarke, Henry Brooke, Edward Taylor, Mary Pratt, all used their literary talents to explore and propagate the sacred mysteries. Serge Hutin in *Les Disciples Anglais De Jacob Boehme: aux XVII^e et XVIII^e Siècles*⁶⁷ makes a detailed study of the mystical trends in seventeenth and eighteenth century England. From the time of the Civil war when the established Church failed to satisfy the needs of the times stress was laid on the doctrine of "illumination," or direct spiritual and mystical experience. The Levellers, the Diggers, the Muggletonians, the Seekers and Ranters, were religio-socio-political groups, ancestors of the Quakers and the Methodists. These sects, along with alchemists such as Robert Fludd and Henry and Thomas Vaughan who collected in the movement called the Brothers of the Rose-Cross, the Kabalists and the Necromantists, all provide a background of occult and esoteric lore in the light of which it is necessary to read some of Blake's seemingly bizarre ideas.⁶⁸ Many of these sects

were headed by unbalanced "prophets" and "prophetesses" whose teachings were extremely ephemeral. More genuine studies into the mystery traditions were conducted by a group of "Behmenists" who formed the origins of the Philadelphian Society, grouped initially around John Pordage (1608-81) and his wife. Among other important figures, the names Jane Lead, Francis Lee and Richard Roach stand out. All these sects used ideas from the past, mingling concepts from various traditions, consciously or unconsciously keeping alive aspects of ancient faiths. As an example we can see William Law, explaining the term "spiritual-materiality" in language which comes surprisingly close to the concept of the Amesha Spentas:

The Divinity, contemplating his ideal images . . . wished to give these ideas reality in the form of spiritual creatures, angels who are the 'images' of God. Thus was engendered the celestial world, 'spiritual materiality' in which the seven qualities of eternal nature manifest themselves in perfect union.⁶⁹

He goes on to tell us that although Lucifer ruined the perfect world, God, with these ruins, created our material world which will finally be purified by fire. Therefore this earth of ours is now a mixture "a marriage of heaven and hell."⁷⁰ While the idea of a "marriage" of good and evil seems on the surface fundamentally opposed to the Zoroastrian ethical code, in a deeper sense it reflects the Zoroastrian Creation story where out of the mixture of the two principles in our world, a new eternally perfect world is to be born.

II

We see then that at various points of time and in a variety of ways knowledge of Zoroastrianism was freely available to Blake through various indirect sources. However, this is not sufficient evidence to warrant a detailed study into the links between the two. It can be argued that Blake might have used Zoroastrian ideas from any such source without understanding the implications of this use or without being aware of the origin of his material.

It is necessary therefore to prove that Blake had access to Zoroastrianism at first-hand, had read of such material and had used Zoroastrian ideas in his work. For this proof we turn to Blake's own age and to two important groups of people who provided eighteenth-century England with direct links to Persia. These were the antiquarians and the travellers, whose books of exotica were subscribed to by a public eager to participate at least vicariously in the opening up of new frontiers of knowledge.

Blake was a seer and a visionary who believed that, "it is impossible to think without images of somewhat on earth" (*Lavater, K.*, p. 88); therefore it is fitting that his direct exposure to Zoroastrian ideas came through the visual medium. The language of prophecy Jean Hagstrum says, unites the verbal and the visual⁷¹ and Blake, the poet-painter, aimed all his life at uniting the two arts not merely to portray the full range of reality but to reject the erroneous idea of a divided creativity. Blake, in his poems which are also paintings, was adapting the eighteenth-century mode of the illustrated book, particularly the emblem book, to frame his own theory of a united composite art.⁷²

Stylistically too, his art can be seen as an example of unity, what has been called "romantic classicism"⁷³ Blake's constant search for a unified structure of existence is perhaps why even as a young engraver's apprentice he could find in ancient sculptures from a far away land, motifs and themes which would recur in his paintings and poetry throughout his creative years. Blake's designs always had a function to perform, to emphasise meaning more precisely and to widen the imaginative horizons. The Persian motifs which he had worked on would also be used in both these fashions. This use of art as a vehicle of inner ideas links Blake with many early religious artists and goes all the way back to those oriental sculptors whose works were carved into the palace at Persepolis and the cliffs of Naqsh-i-Rustam.

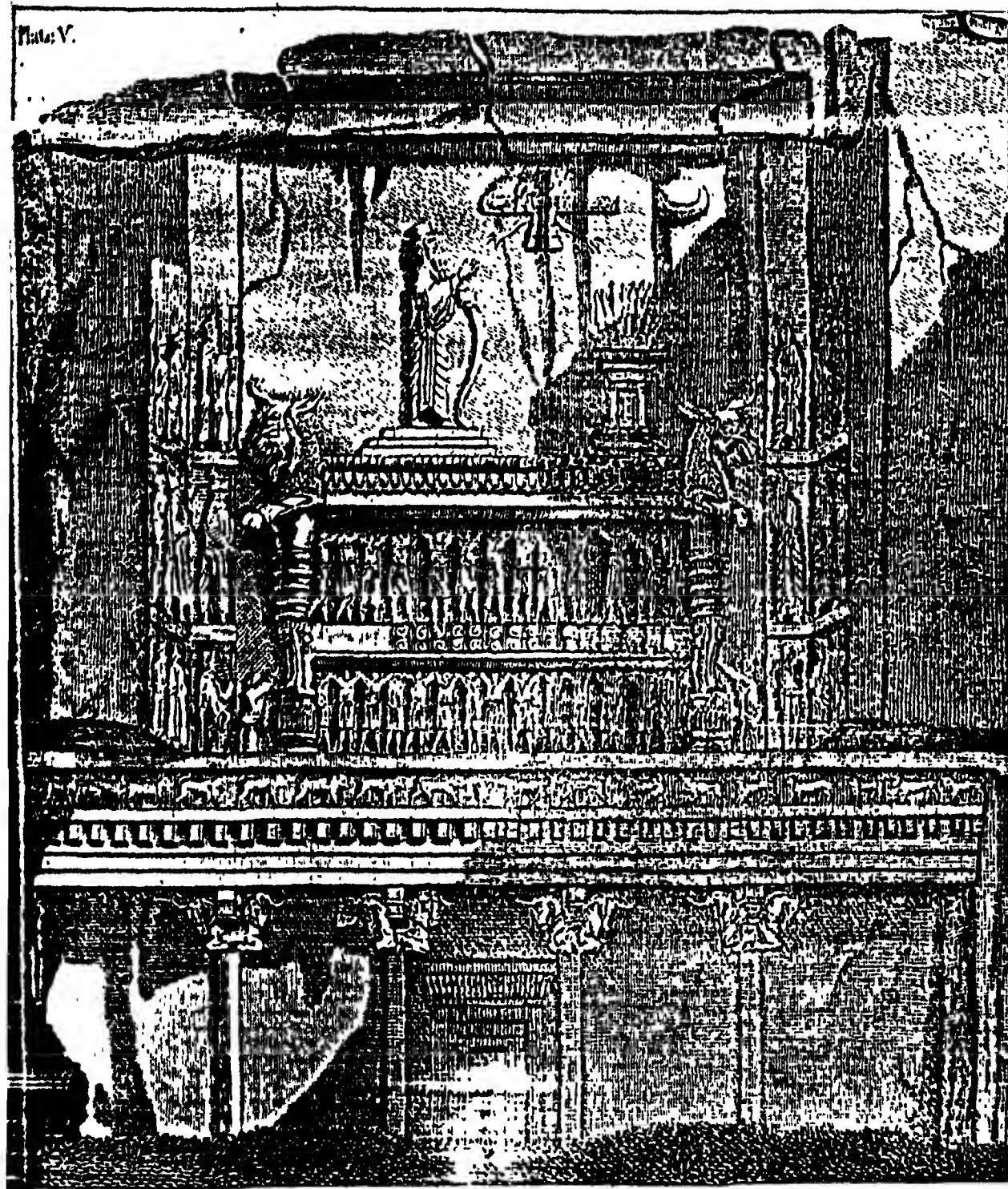
The plates we see here from Le Bruyn and Bryant's books reveal some of Blake's exposure, while he trained as an engraver with Basire, to Persian art. Anthony Blunt in an important article has examined Blake's borrowings from such early art. Blunt puts Blake's borrowings under four divisions one of which is the use of oriental art. (See plates 2-9)⁷⁴ Blake, too has stated that Greek classical statues are only "copies, though fine ones, from greater works of the Asiatic patriarchs" (*Descp. Catalogue, K.*, p. 565) and he, the artist, has composed pictures of:

a mythological cast, similar to those Apotheoses of Persian, Hindoo and Egyptian Antiquity, which are still preserved on rude monuments, being copies from some stupendous originals now lost or perhaps buried till some happier age.

Then in a significant sentence Blake goes on to confirm that:

The Artist having been taken in vision into these ancient republics . . . of Asia has seen those wonderful originals called in the Sacred Scriptures

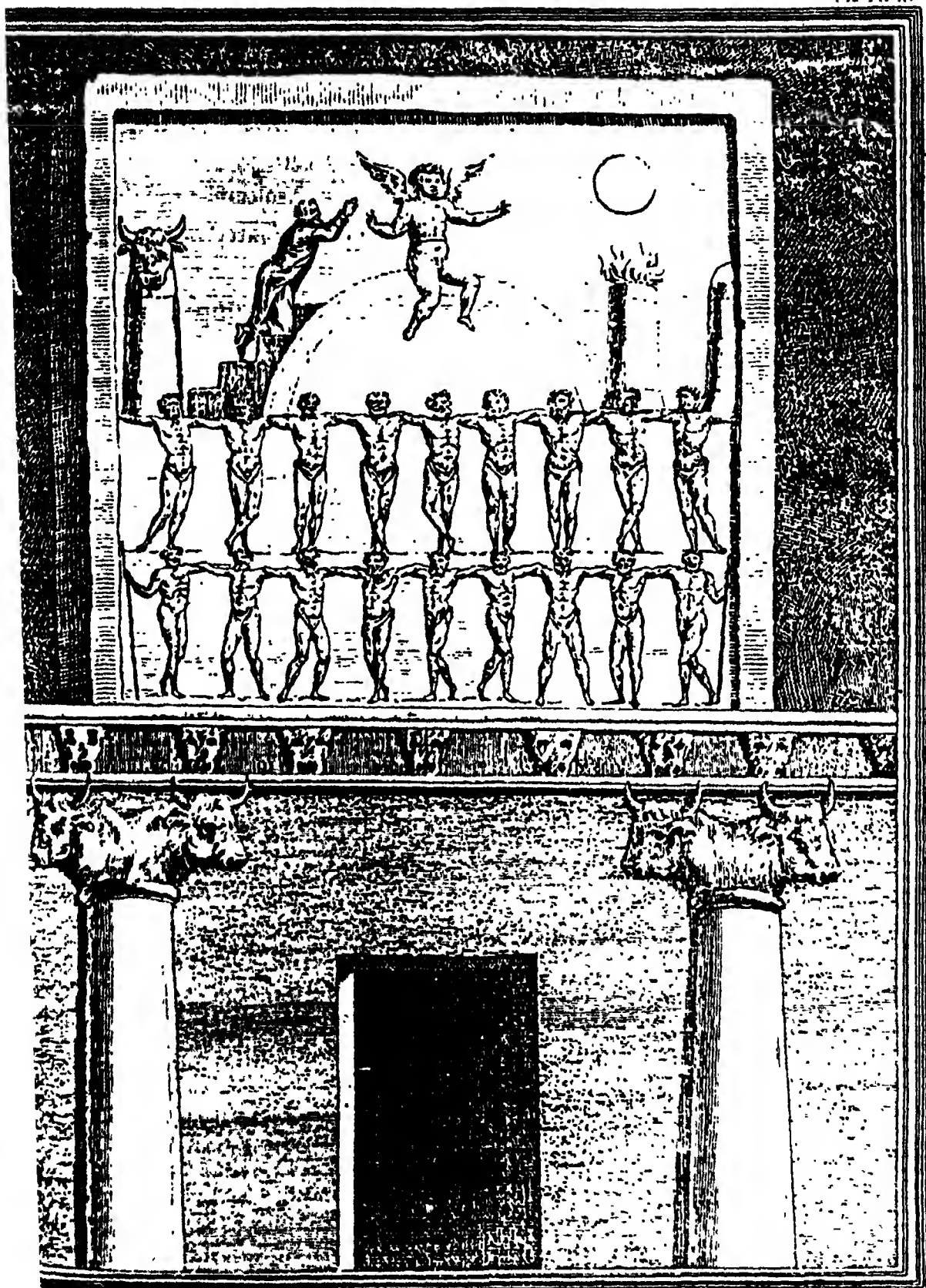
Plate V.



Temple of Mithras Petraeus in these Mountains of Perseus. From Le Bruyn. ^{Basire Sc.}

Pl. 2

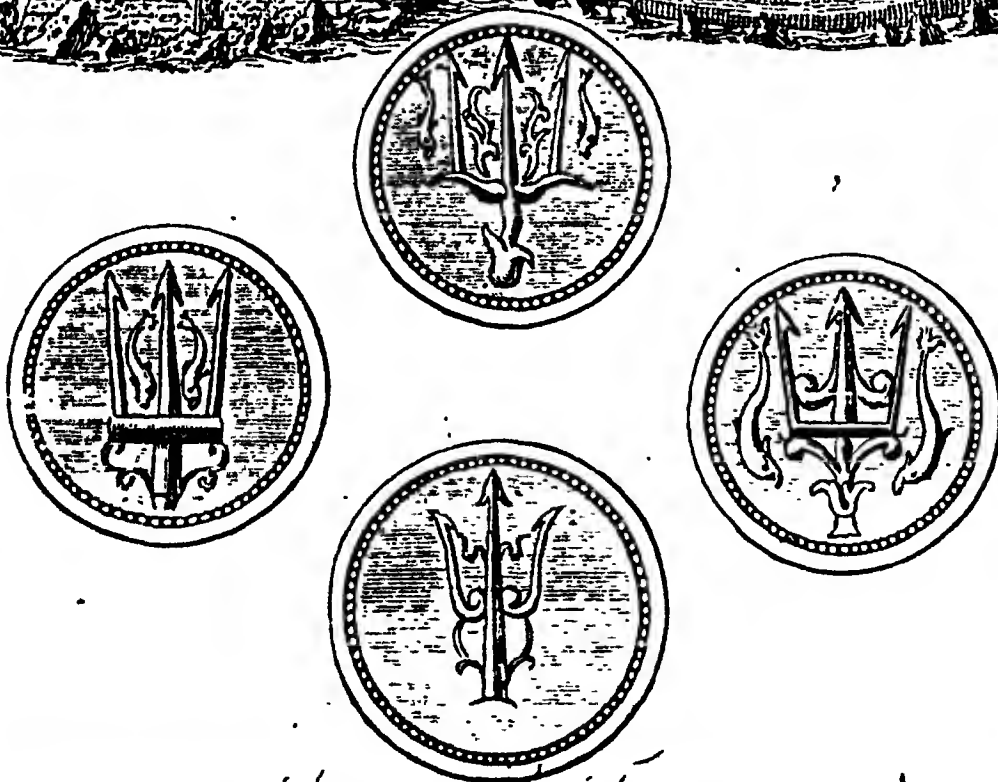
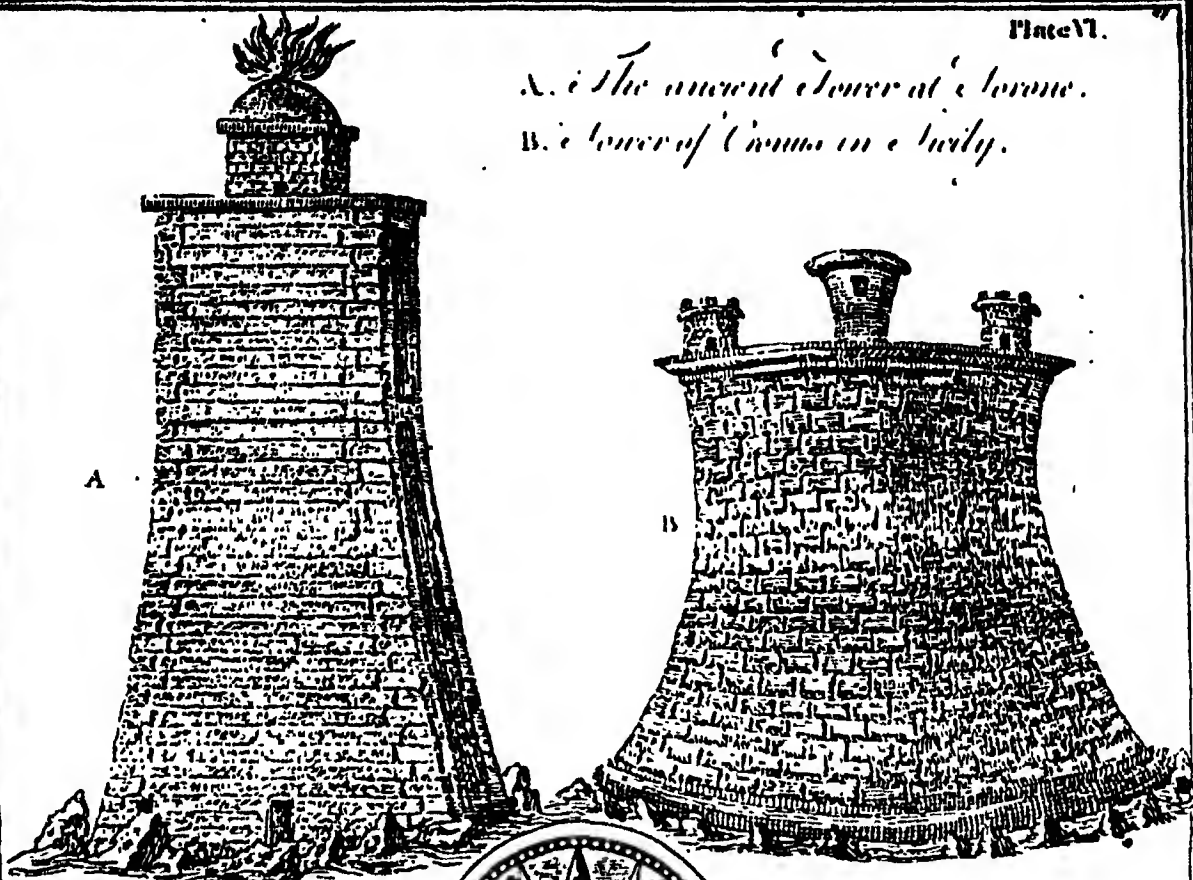
Bryant, copied from Le Bruyn signed Basire Sc.



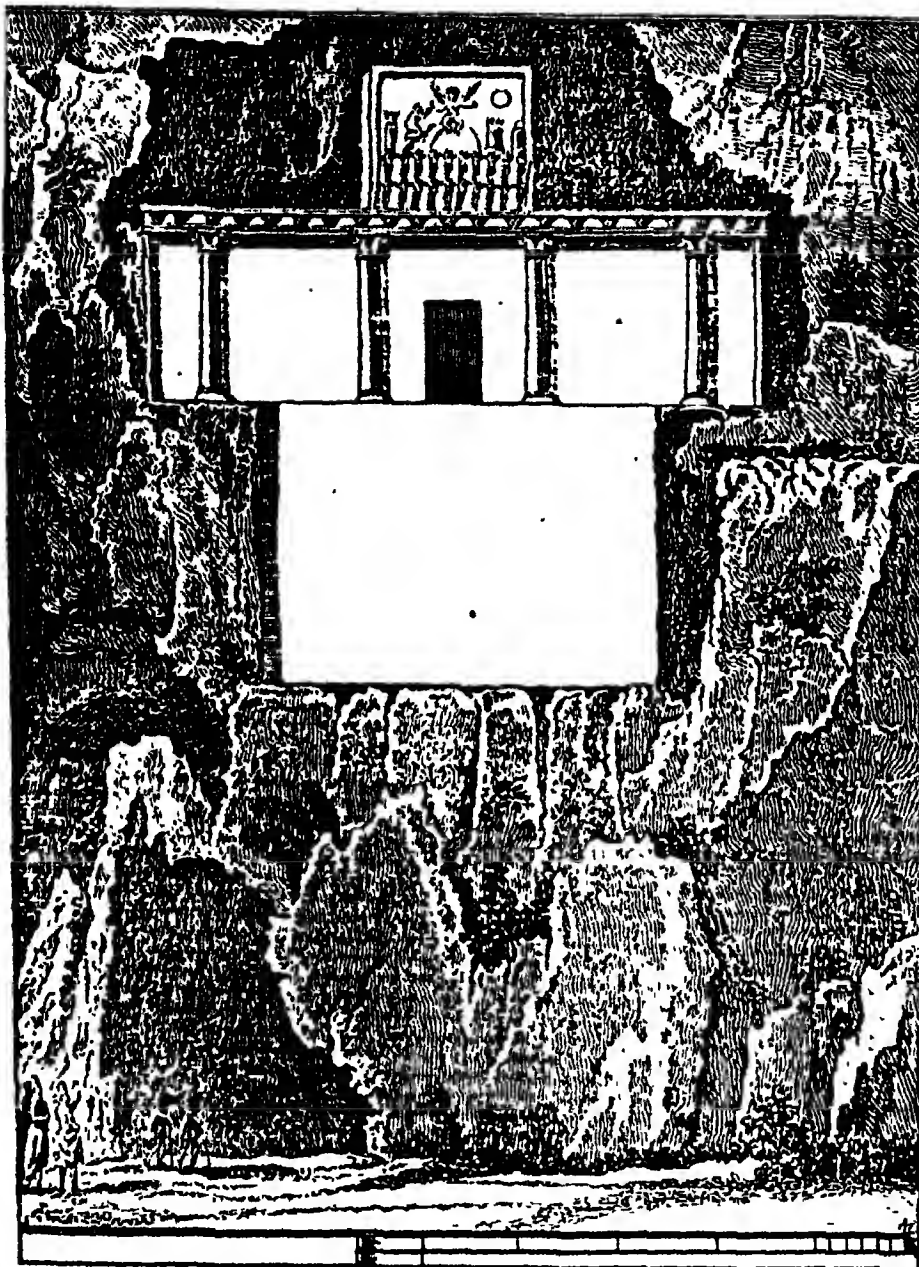
Volney, Boccaccio et Ciro Perseus & Thevenot Ciro Chando p. 118

Basire

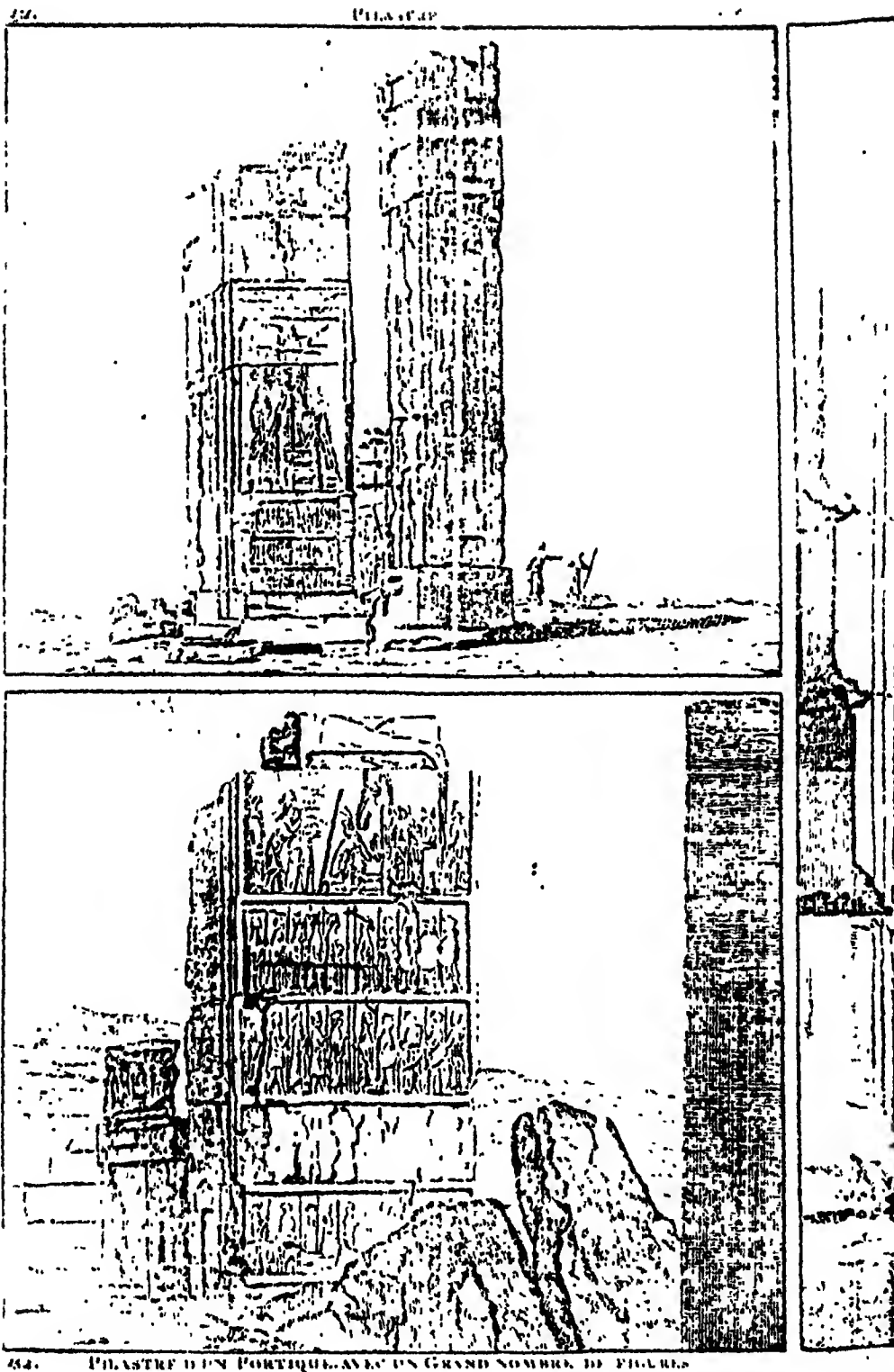
A. i The ancient Tower at 'e borow.
B. i Tower of 'Cinna in a baily.



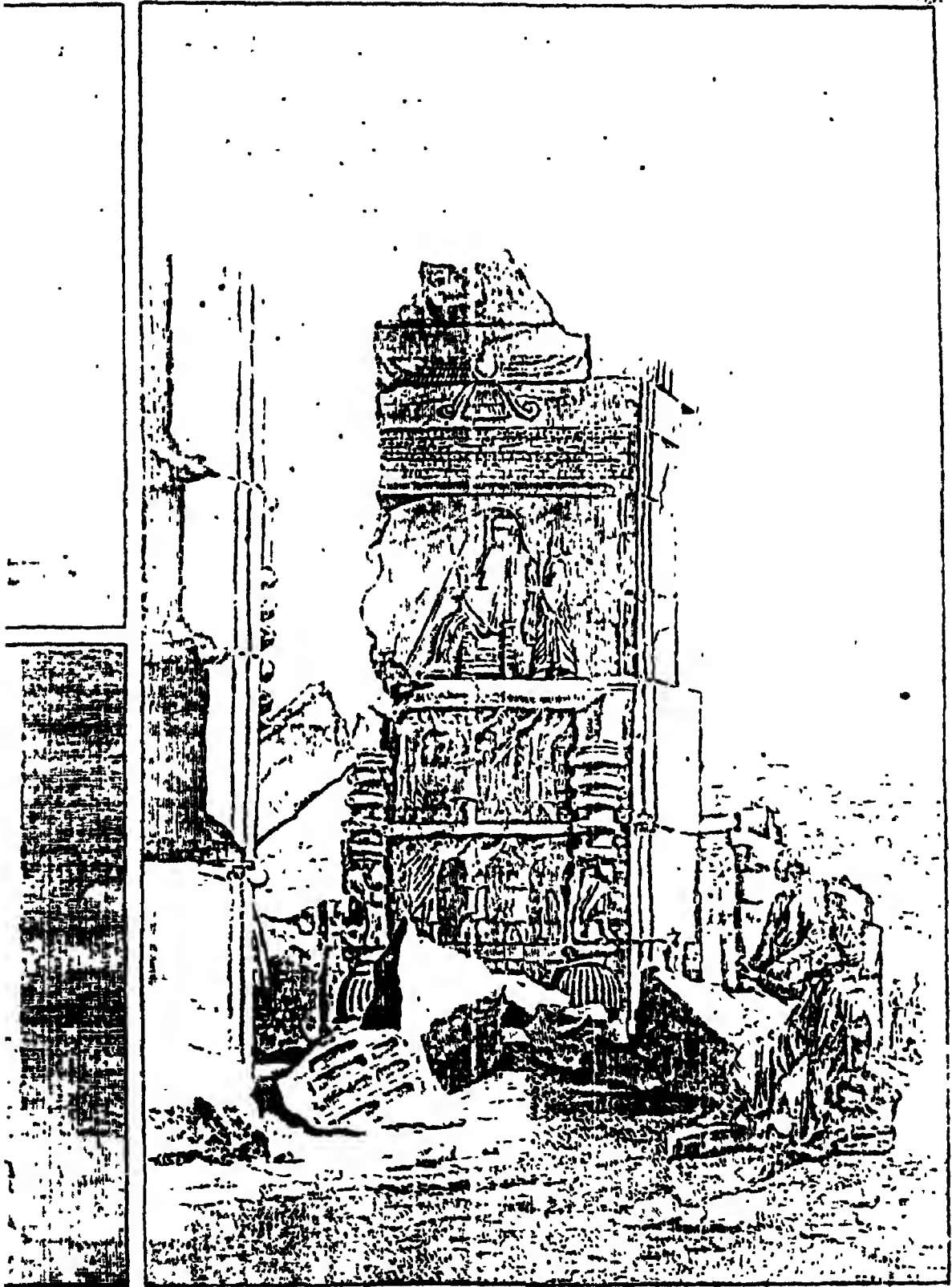
i Ancient i Tower.



1. Petra e. Nithra or Temple of Nithras from the Venetian Engraving.

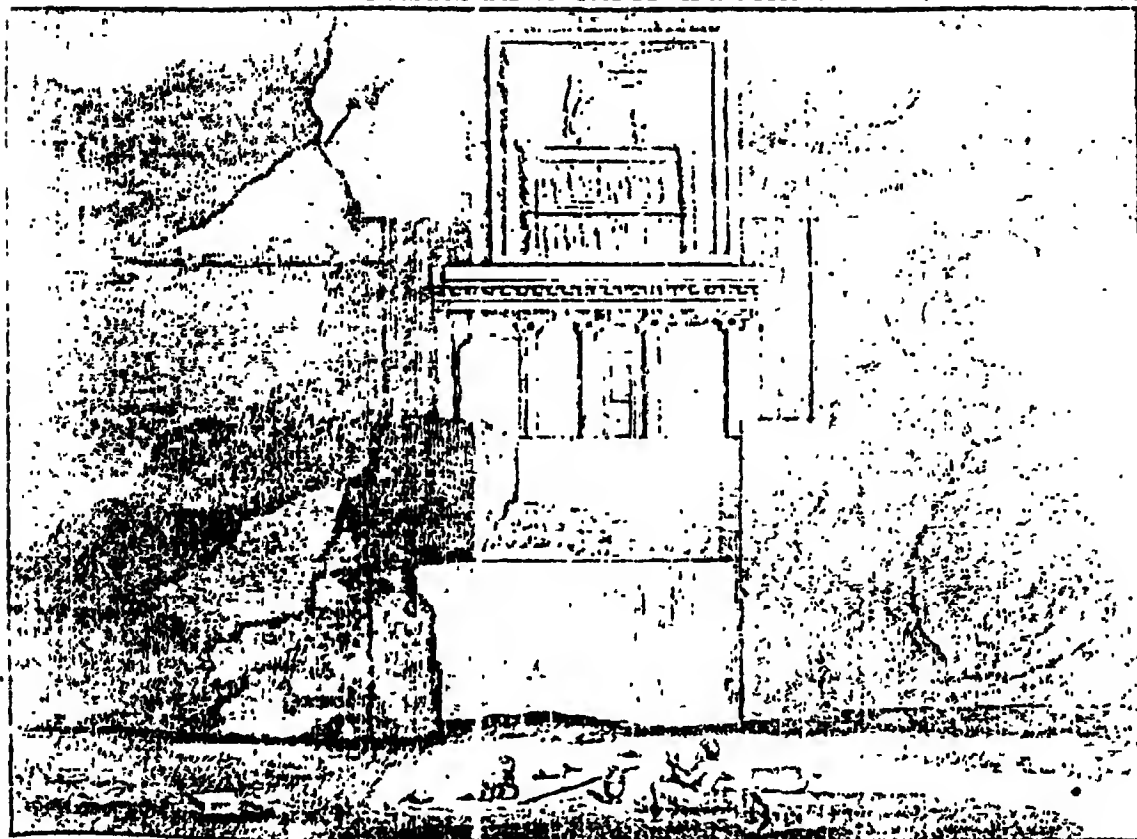


44. PILASTRE D'UN PORTIQUE, AVEC UN GRAND NOMBRE DE FIGURES

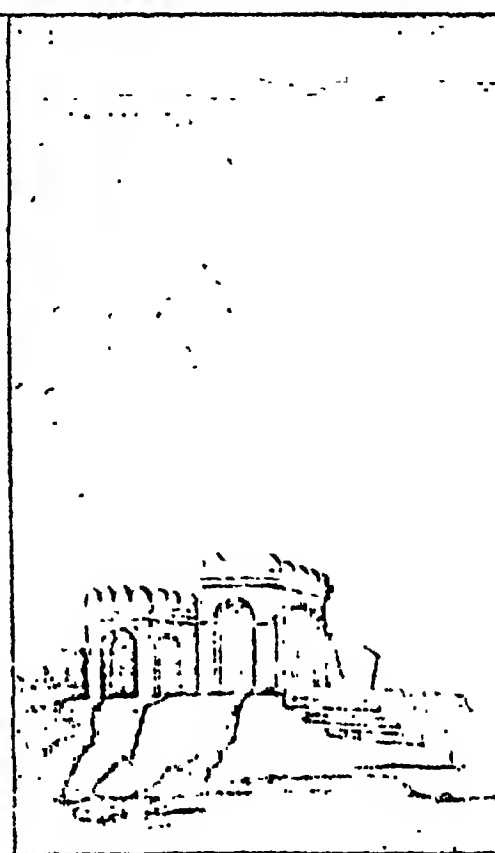


Pl. 7

Le Bruyn. Note Fravashi over King.

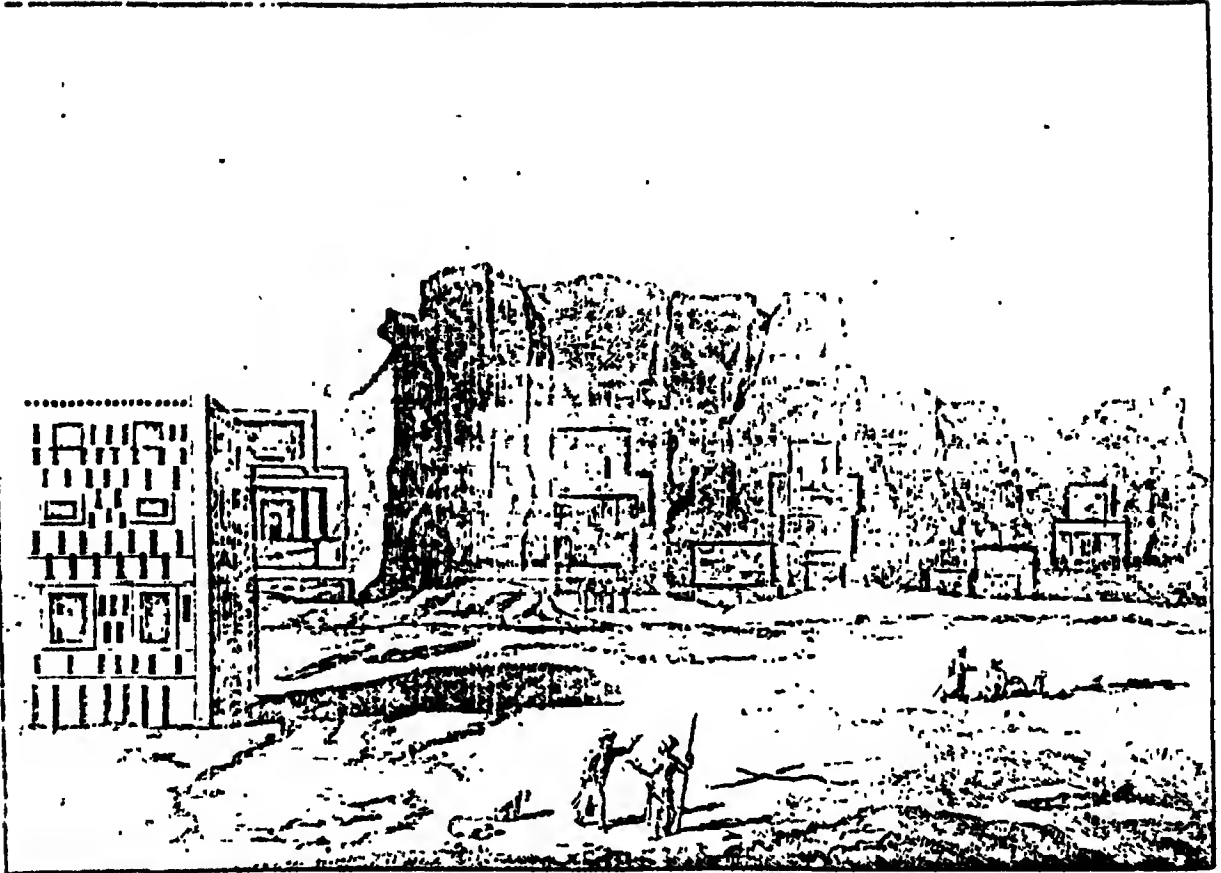


DEUX CAVALIERS A CHEVAL



DEUX PETITS EDIFICES.

TOMBES A NAXI RUSTAN.



FIGURES ENTRE LES DEUX TOMBEAUX



FIGURES A DEMI ENTERREES. 46

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the Cherubium, which were sculptured and painted on walls of Temples, Towers, Cities, Palaces . . . The Artist has endeavoured to emulate the grandeur of those seen in his vision . . .

And he finally gives details:

Those wonderful originals seen in my visions, were some of them one hundred feet in height; some were painted as pictures, and some carved as basso relievos, and some as groups of statues, all containing mythological and recondite meaning, where more is meant than meets the eye.

(*Descriptive Catalogue, K.*, pp. 565-66)

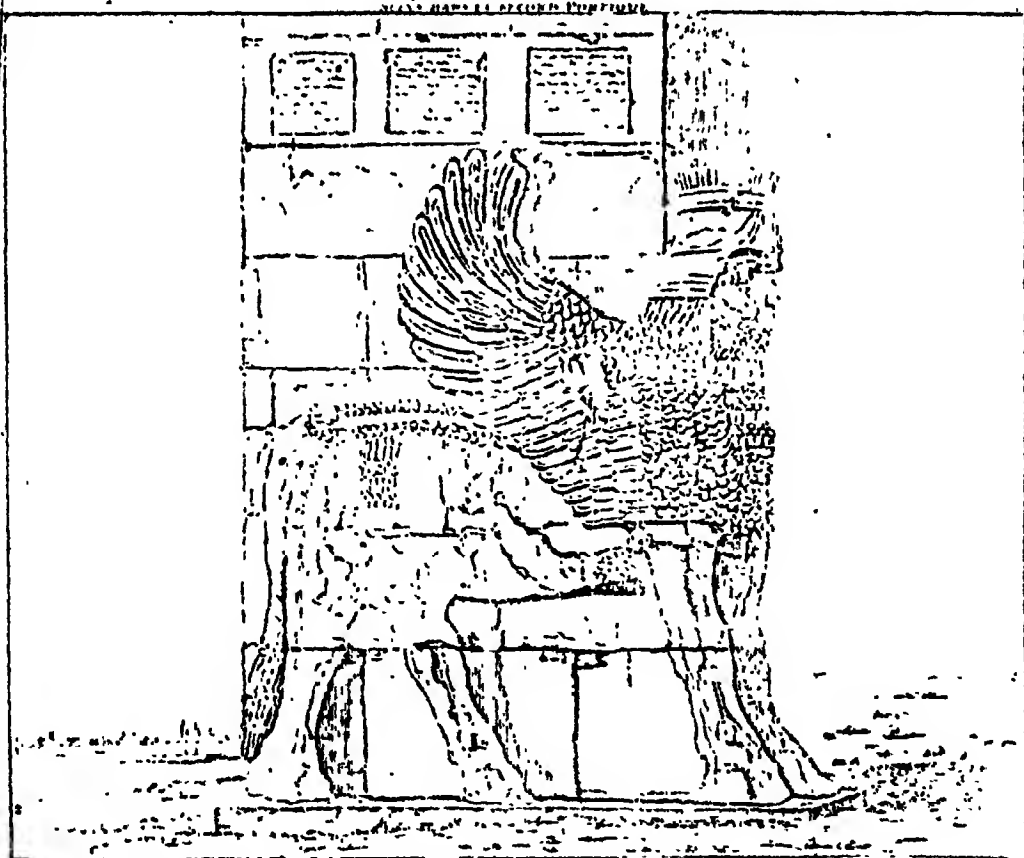
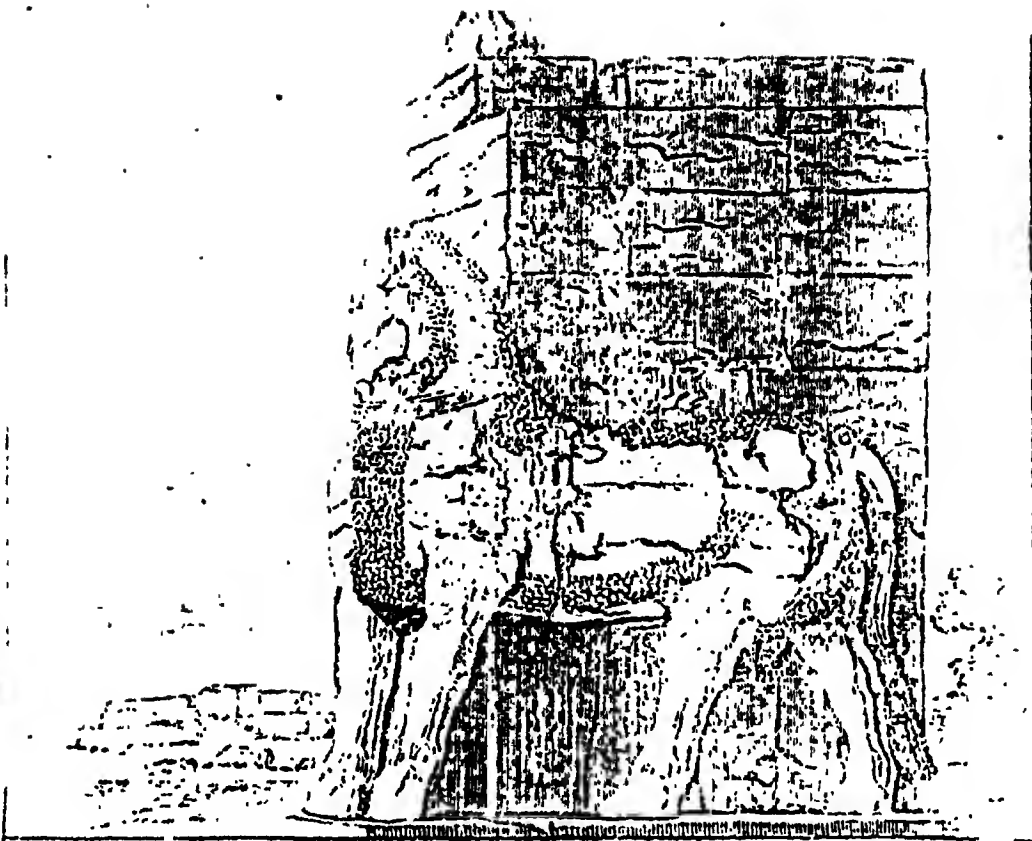
This immediately calls to mind the Palace of Persepolis and the huge rock carvings and reliefs of Naqsh-e Rostam "The Plain of the Magi" which had been regularly reproduced by travellers and antiquarians as examples of the exotic art of the Persian Empire. For William Blake these ancient works were pure inspiration, unsurpassable, "The extent of the human mind" (*K.*, p. 579).

As was seen briefly in Chapter I, it was Geoffrey Keynes who first traced Blake's Persian links back to his apprentice days. While earlier writers such as Laurence Binyon had ascribed to Blake's prophetic insight the use of the man-headed bulls motif years before Layard's excavations of Nineveh, Keynes, rightly points out that Blake's true source was Bryant's *New System or An Analysis of Ancient Mythology*. Blake was to use the symbol of the Bulls in the great picture of the Chariot of Time/Inspiration years later in *Jerusalem* just as he was to repeatedly use the symbol of the Mundane Egg from Bryant. It is in Bryant too that Keynes found "most remarkable" the plate reproduced here "Zor-Aster Archimagus before an Altar with a particular covering like a Cupselis or hive: taken from Kaempfer's *Amoenitates Exoticae*."

Examining this design Keynes notices that the frieze of figures, with arms upraised and crossed, would reappear a number of times in Blake's art; In 1795 in *Night Thoughts*, in 1809 in Milton's "Hymn on the Nativity," in the water-colour drawing of "David delivered out of Many Waters," in the Butts Collection, and finally, in 1820 in the magnificent design from *The Illustrations to the Book of Job* which we know popularly as "When the Morning Stars Sang Together." As seen in Chapter I, Keynes uses all this as proof of boyhood influences which stayed with Blake throughout his creative years. The plates reproduced here are examples of the way in which Blake uses and transforms the man-headed bulls motif and the frieze of angels both of which appeared frequently as examples of Persian symbolic art (See Plates 10-19).⁷⁵

Blake's apprenticeship under James Basire is documented by Gilchrist; what is of particular note is that Basire was engraver both to the Royal Society and the Antiquarian Society and Blake worked with him for seven years.⁷⁶ The engravings executed by the apprentices were all signed with Basire's name so no work can be identified with absolute certainty, nevertheless Blake scholars have marked some of those engravings which appear to be executed by Blake and the influences of many others is apparent in designs done by him in later years.

Blake's life covered, as we have seen, one of the most active periods in the study of the East and in the science of archaeology. This was the period when what we today call "comparative mythology" became the focus of attention. This was an attempt to formulate common underlying themes which had symbolic significance for all races. The antiquarians of Blake's age can therefore be seen as the pioneers of a cosmopolitan



Pl. 10 *Le Bruyn.* The man-headed bulls of Persepolis.

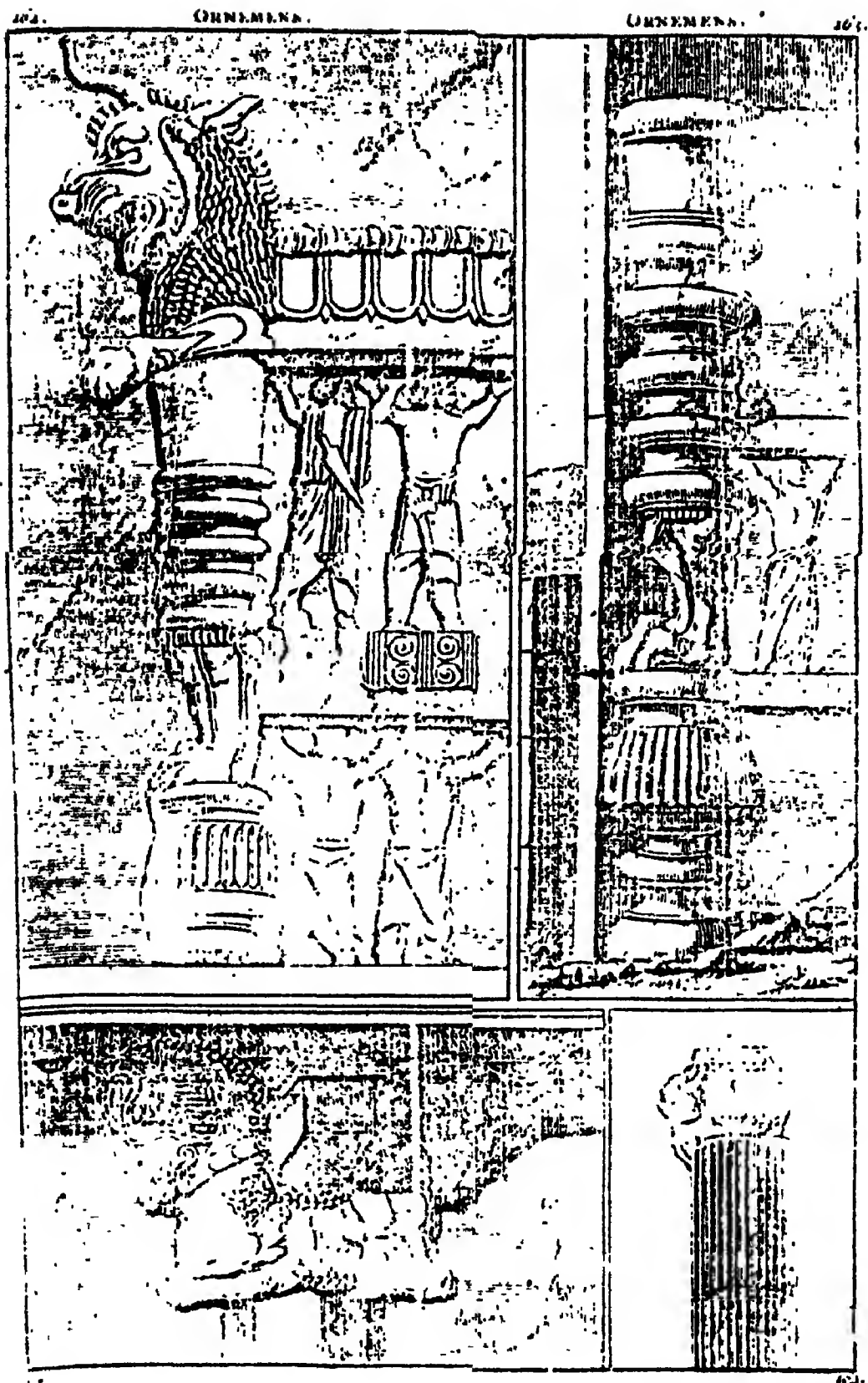


Pl. 11 Photographic details of Man-Lion from Persepolis.

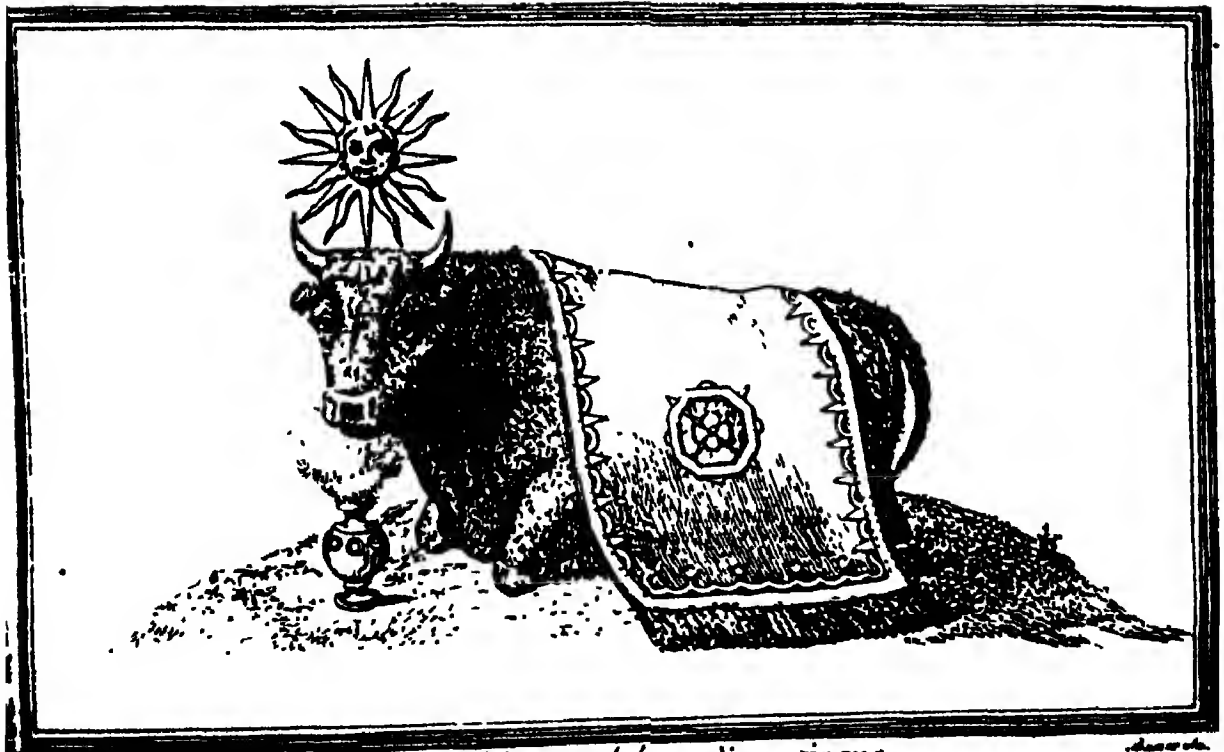
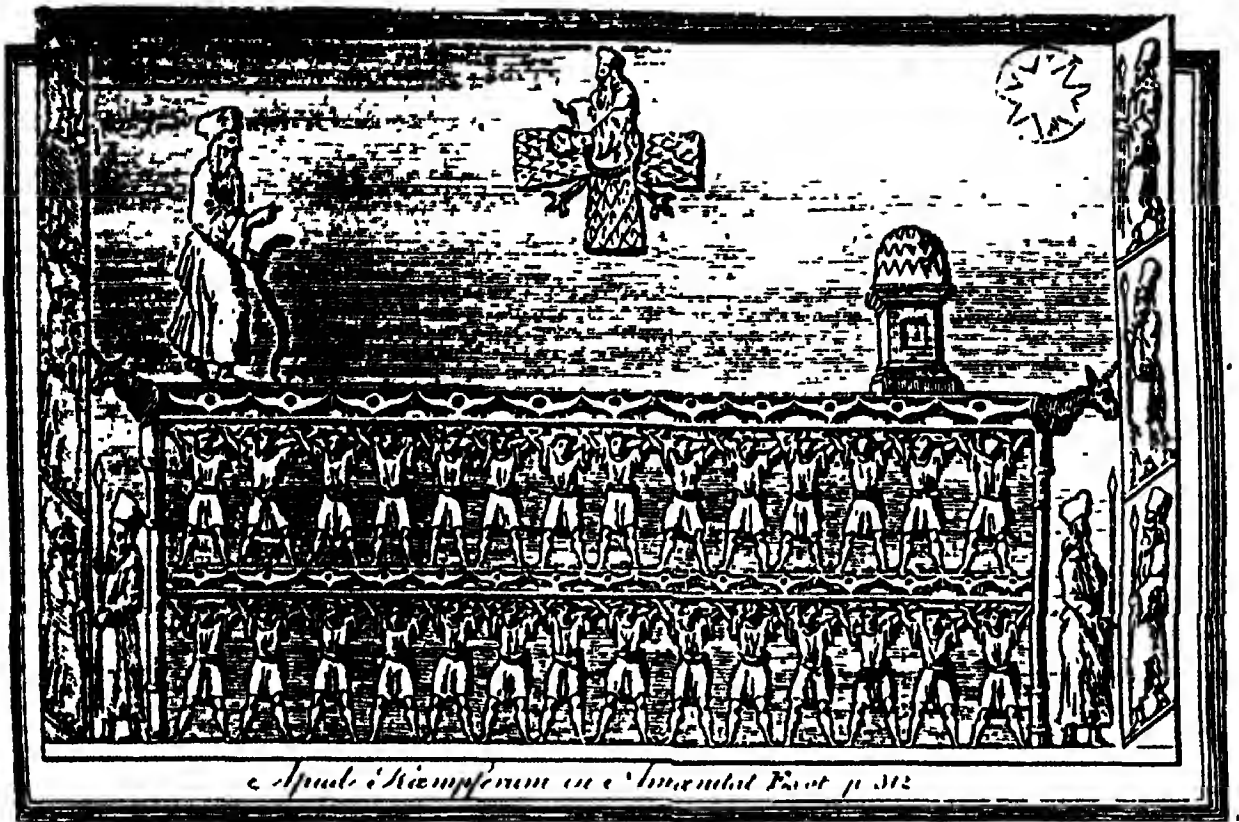


Pl. 12

Blake's use of the Man-headed Bulls. *Jerusalem Pl. [46]D*



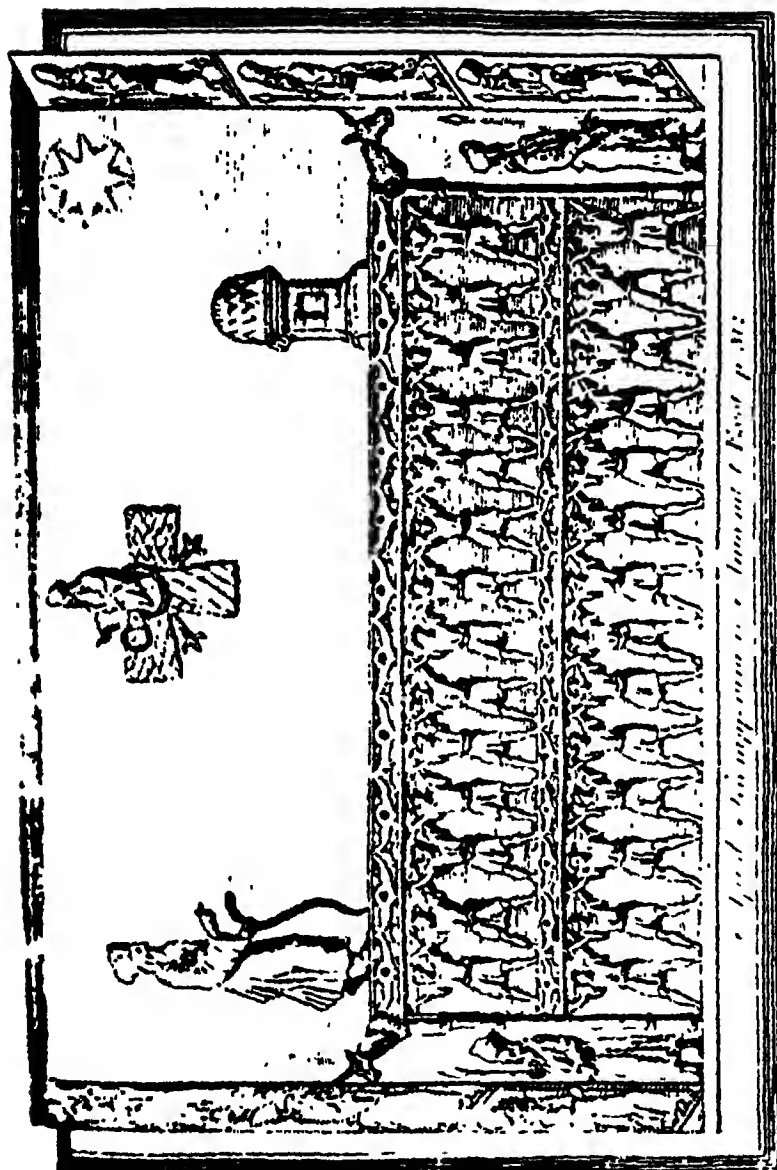
Pl. 13 *Le Bruyn*. Details of Persian carving.



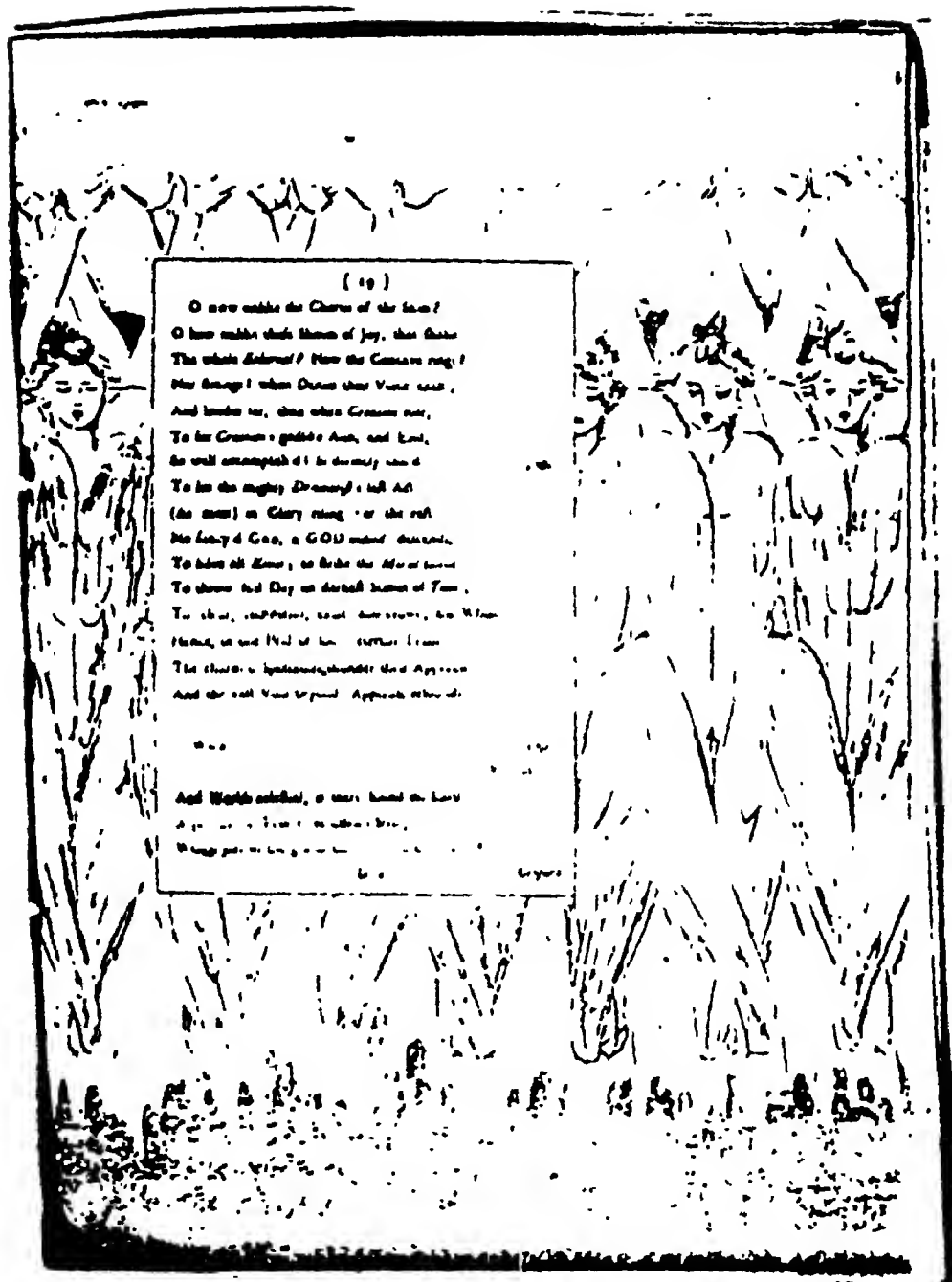
Zor-dater, sive e huius colunt .f. gypciacus.

Pl. 14

Bryant signed Basire Sc Note Kaempfer's interpretation of the Naqsh-i-Rustam frieze.



Pl. 15 Keynes. Reproduction in *Blake Studies*.





Pl. 17

Another use of criss-crossing figures in "David Delivered out of Many Waters."



Pl. 18

Further development of criss-crossing angels from an early proof of *Job*.



Pl. 19 Water-colour for Thomas Butts, "When the Morning Stars Sang Together."

humanism, keen to integrate the Christian tradition with the earlier Greek, Jewish and Oriental modes of thought which were then coming to light. The Scepticism of the Enlightenment too had prepared the way for a discussion, if not as yet a doubting, of traditional Christian doctrine. This combined with the interest in the past, led to what Northrop Frye calls "Mythopoeic poetry,"⁷⁷ or poets substituting worn out, common myths with new interests from pagan superstition, Gothic culture, the Celtic and Norse sagas and the East, particularly Persia and India. Jacob Bryant had provided Blake with his earliest exposure to these ideas, and we see that Blake's early work in the *Annotations to Lavater* carries the same message:

1. Know, in the first place, that mankind agree in essence, as they do in their limbs and senses. 2. Mankind differ as much in essence as form, limbs and senses, and only so and not more.

On this Blake remarked, "This is true Christian philosophy far above all abstractions" (*Lavater, K.*, p. 65).

Jacob Bryant, a major influence in Blake's formative years, had initiated Blake into such thought. His three quarto volumes of the *New System*⁷⁸ bear a title that is self explanatory for he says it "contains an Account of the Principal Events in the First Ages from the Deluge to the Dispersion." Bryant a clergyman whom Blake respected greatly, has had his work dismissed as "a mausoleum of misinformation"⁷⁹ yet Bryant took great pains and displays immense erudition in trying to prove his theory of a single world culture. He, however, telescopes history and confounds geographical boundaries while proving that true antiquity belonged not to the classical myths of the Greeks but to the world of the Druids, the Magi, Zoroaster and Hermes Trismegistus. Like all speculative mythologists Bryant's book is full of leads in the form of names of other authors who

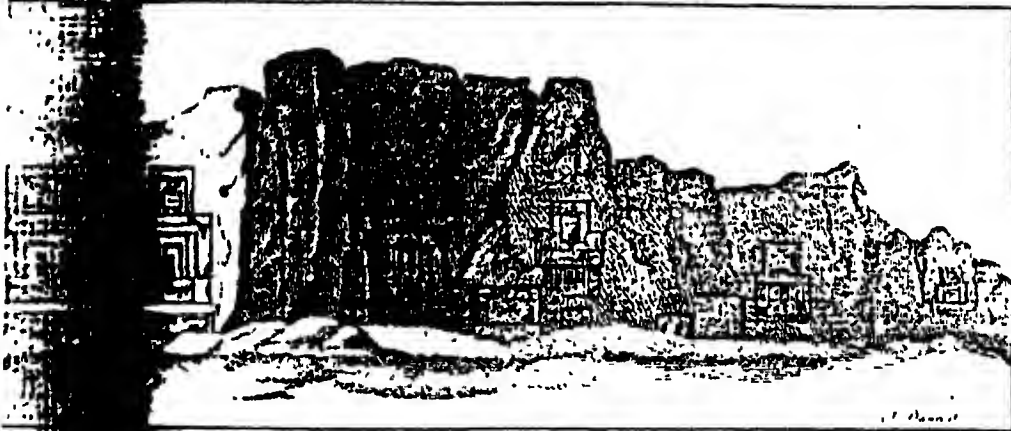
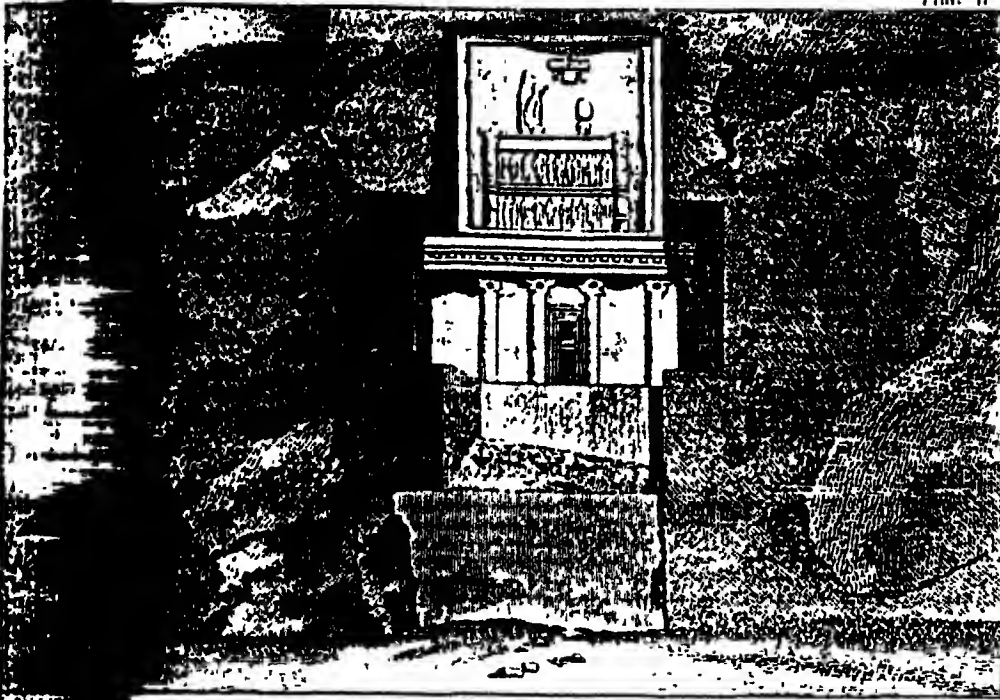
could provide clues to help prove his point.

All three of Bryant's volumes deal with Zoroastrianism and there are plates as well as textual details regarding its theology and observances. If in "The Worship of fire" he sometimes wanders off the point he provides visual proof of fire temples and explains modes of worship. If, while citing Hyde's reference to the Fravashi-symbol as "the soul of the king," Bryant argues that it is "an emblem of the Deity," he however gives us the names of many who have discussed these examples of ancient art; Kaempfer, Le Bruyn, Mandesloe [sic], Chardin, Thevenot, Herbet being some of them. While he stubbornly insists, despite the visual and first hand evidence of many of those same authors, that the mighty rocks of Naqsh-i-Rustam are caverns for worship, the plates he uses are faithfully copied from his sources and signed Basire Sc. In the midst of some strange speculation, basic ideas regarding the sacred fire, Mithraic legends and myths from the Pahlavi Texts emerge. Significantly Volume II contains a whole chapter entitled "Zoroaster" whose philosophy we are advised to study not merely through the Magi, but also from accounts of ancient Babylonians and Chaldeans. Zoroastrian texts, the "Sadder" "Shaster" "Vedam" "Zandavasta" are mentioned and the opinions of ancient Greek authors regarding the authority of the doctrines are presented. Legends about Zoroaster include that of the infant laughing at birth, and the story of his enlightenment. The sun, as the visible symbol or "son" of The Creator, and the sacred "fillet," or girdle The Kusti of the Zoroastrians, form part of the discussions, all of which are interspersed with plates portraying not only ancient ruins but also typical scenes of worship. The frieze which attracted Keynes's attention is only one of six such designs all taken from Bryant's plates entitled "The plain of the Magi"(See Plates 20-21).⁸⁰

Mary Boyce in *The History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. II, describes this legendary area of the mountain range near Persepolis which descends to the plains in a sheer cliff



PL. 20 Bryant signed Basire Sc " Think of a holy man within the cloud,
love springs up in your thoughts "



Side of Malwas near Lake Anstara in C. Persia. The temple on the rock near
 Plan of the Malwas — J. P. Davis

Pl. 21 Bryant The Plain of the Magi from Le Bruyn

face. This cliff face is Naqsh-i-Rustam where Darius had his tomb prepared. The tombs were vaults cut into the rock and a huge part of the mountain face was carved out in front. These sculptures and reliefs all have Zoroastrian motifs and symbols primarily those of fire censers with their flames leaping upwards, and the famous hovering winged figure.⁸¹ Although the exact historical references were confused in Bryant's book the main religious implications came through to the reader. Finally, and most important, is the fact that Bryant concludes his entire book with an account quoted in the original French from Anquetil du Perron's *Zend-Avesta*. The passage used is from the "*Boun-Dehesh*," or The Book of Creation, and after a word perfect quotation two Zoroastrian prayers, or *Nyaeshes*, are quoted in detail.⁸²

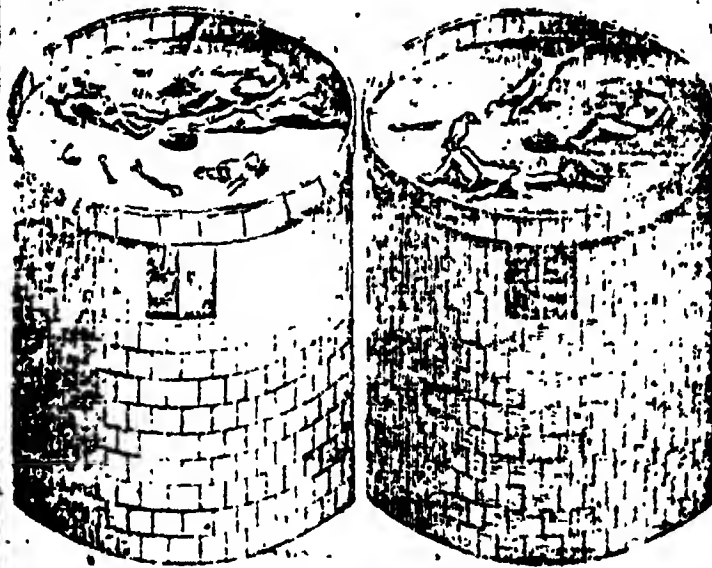
Even a casual glance at these volumes would have provided the reader not only with a good deal of knowledge about the philosophy and ceremonies of the Persians, but also with the sources necessary for further exploration. Since the engravings, done by Basire's apprentices, were copied from various books it is only logical to suppose that those accounts too would be seen while working on the *New System*. These travellers, missionaries, historians and translators are all remarkable in the knowledge that they reveal of Zoroastrianism, while the plates so painstakingly drawn and engraved provide almost photographic clarity in displaying a system of worship which continues in the same manner up to the present day (See Appendix C). In the following chapters while discussing Blake's work the symbols derived from some of these plates and the religious philosophy as well as the myths these writers described will be taken up for individual examination. Here there can be only a broad survey of the other major antiquarians and travellers of Blake's time.

Thomas Hyde and Anquetil du Perron have been acknowledged as the pioneers in European researches on the *Avesta* and it is important to realise that they were seen as leaders in this field even by Blake's own age when they were widely and authoritatively quoted. However a search into the sources of Zoroastrian knowledge in post-Renaissance Europe leads one to discover even earlier writers who had also made close studies of the Persian faith. As early as 1590 Barnabé Brisson wrote *De Regio Persarum Principatu*⁸³ quoting from Greek sources the stories of Persia, the Mithraic legends and the struggle of the contrary principles, while in 1630, seventy years before Hyde's monumental book, Henry Lord, a preacher to the "Hon'ble company of Merchants" trading in East India, presented in his *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects*⁸⁴ an indictment against the heathens which nevertheless elaborated on many "heathenish" customs particularly their "idolatrous worshippe of fire." Lord shares Bryant's fascination with the Zoroastrian creation myth, as well as with the story of the Prophet's birth. As in many European accounts Zoroaster is shown as the first Law-giver, who received Revelation after he "saw An Angel whose face glittered with beames of Sun;" and as the first man to whom God revealed the Seven Ages of our world, from the "Golden" through the "Silver" "brazen" "tynne" "leaden" "Steele" and "Iron." An accurate account of Zoroaster's ministry is found which includes the trials he faced at the hands of "Churchmen" at court and his legendary cure of the king's favourite horse, Aspa Siha.⁸⁵ Besides these accounts, Lord's book also gives details of the faith as he found it practised in India, with its injunctions of purity and charity and the rituals of birth, initiation, marriage and death. Such accuracy regarding minor details comes from obviously first hand experience.

Thomas Hyde was Professor at Oxford when he wrote his *Veterum Persarum*, first published in 1700, which provides the source material on Zoroastrianism for many

TAB. XIII

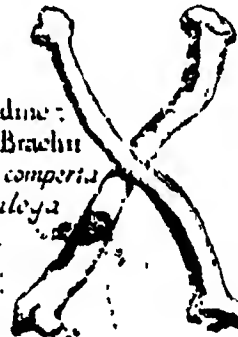
Nº 47



Magorum coelestria duo (Album et Nigrum) 12 pedes alta, Bostonia



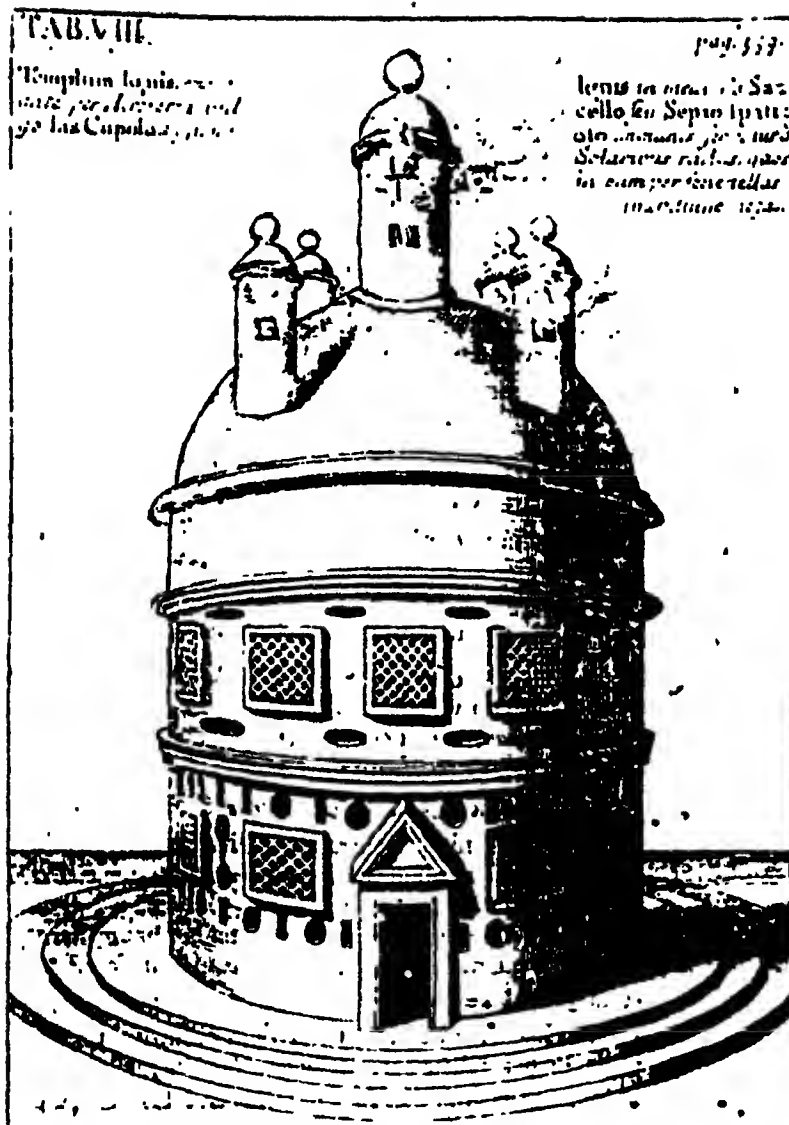
Focile arundine
um atq; Focile Brachii
inter se ciliata, et comperit
sibi invicem analoga
pag. 338.



Magorum coelestria duo (Album et Nigrum) 12 pedes alta, Bostonia
Wintonia, 1711. Sepulchra Regum et Principum hanc Tabulam
DND. 1711. T. II. M. B. h. p.

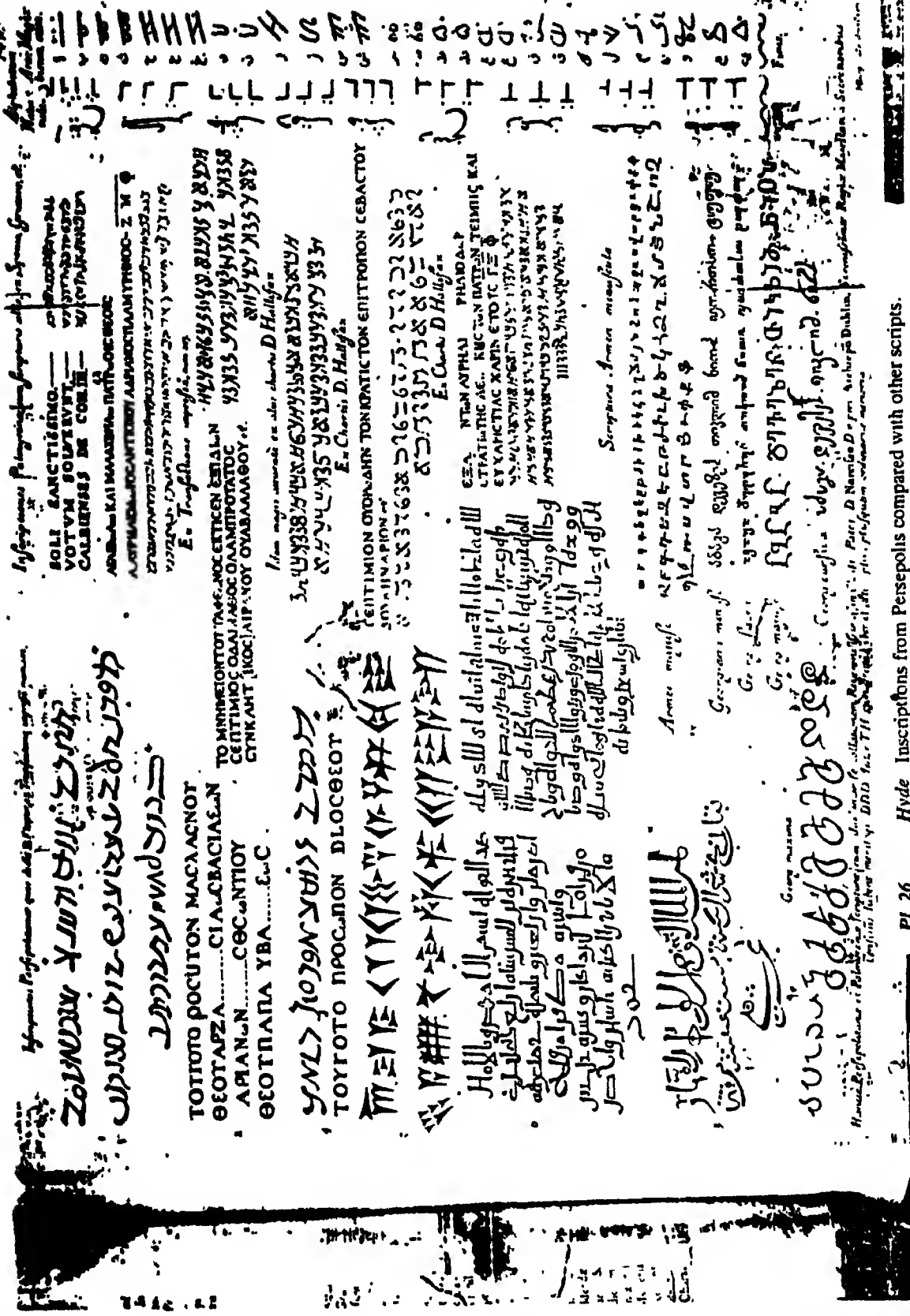
Pl. 23

Hyde. Visualization of the disposal of the dead on the Towers of Silence.



Illustri Reverendo in Christo Patri IOHANNI Dnr. perm. Episcopo
Circassienli hanc Tabulam Gratiitudinis exq. habens meritisq.
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later accounts in Western literature. Hyde, drawing on the Creation story of the *Sad-dar Bundahishn*, emphasized the role of Zurvan, and used early accounts of the faith, adding a Christian slant to them, thereby making Zoroastrianism acceptable to his seventeenth century morality because it was so like the "True" religion. Unlike Barnabe Brisson, Hyde was aware that Zoroastrianism was a living religion still preserved in pockets of Persia and India, but while he possessed several Persian manuscripts, he was unable to read the texts in the original or furnish new insights. Hyde's plates of illustration move away from the rocks of ancient history to portray scenes of worship, disposal of the dead, royal personages and reproduction of script (See Plates 22-26).⁸⁶

The difference between Hyde and Anquetil du Perron is not merely the difference between the pedantic, scholarly clergyman and the romantic adventurer; it is also perhaps the difference between the Christian apologist and the humanist whose interest lay, not in linking all knowledge with the Bible, but in discovering new facets of man. In the Preliminary discourse to the first volume of his book Anquetil tells us in his own words:

In 1754, I chanced to see, in Paris, four Zend leaves on the Vendidad which is in Oxford. Immediately, I resolved to enrich my country with this unique work. I planned to translate it, and for this purpose to learn ancient Persian in Gujrati or in Kirman. This work would help me extend my ideas on the origin of languages . . . it was still very essential to throw light on the Ancient East, which people sought in vain from the Greeks and Romans.⁸⁷

Anquetil's tale is fascinating, for as Raymond Schwab says, "The scholars looked at the famous fragment of Oxford, and then returned to their studies, Anquetil looked, and then went to India."⁸⁸ This road led after great adventures to Surat where from Dastur Darab the high priest of the Parsis, he learnt whatever he could, returning to France after six

years to publish, in 1771, the three volumes of *The Zend Avesta*. Anquetil's account contains, besides the texts, a stress on the Pahlavi creation story of the *Bundahishn* and on Zurvanite elements. For the first time the prayers of the *Vendidad*, the *Nyaeshes* to the Sun and the Moon, the *Patets*, the *Afringans* were made available to the west along with glossaries of the language and accounts of religious and secular customs. The plates in his book give details even of clothes and utensils (See Plates 27-32) used in the daily life of the descendants of the legendary Magi. The book gave rise to considerable interest among European scholars, but the negative response in England at first damaged much of Anquetil's hard labour, the chief issue with Sir William Jones being the authenticity of his translation.⁸⁹ The course of the Sir William Jones-Perron quarrel is not as important as its implication that issues regarding Persia and Zoroastrianism were subject to public discussion and intellectual debate in Blake's lifetime (See Appendix D).

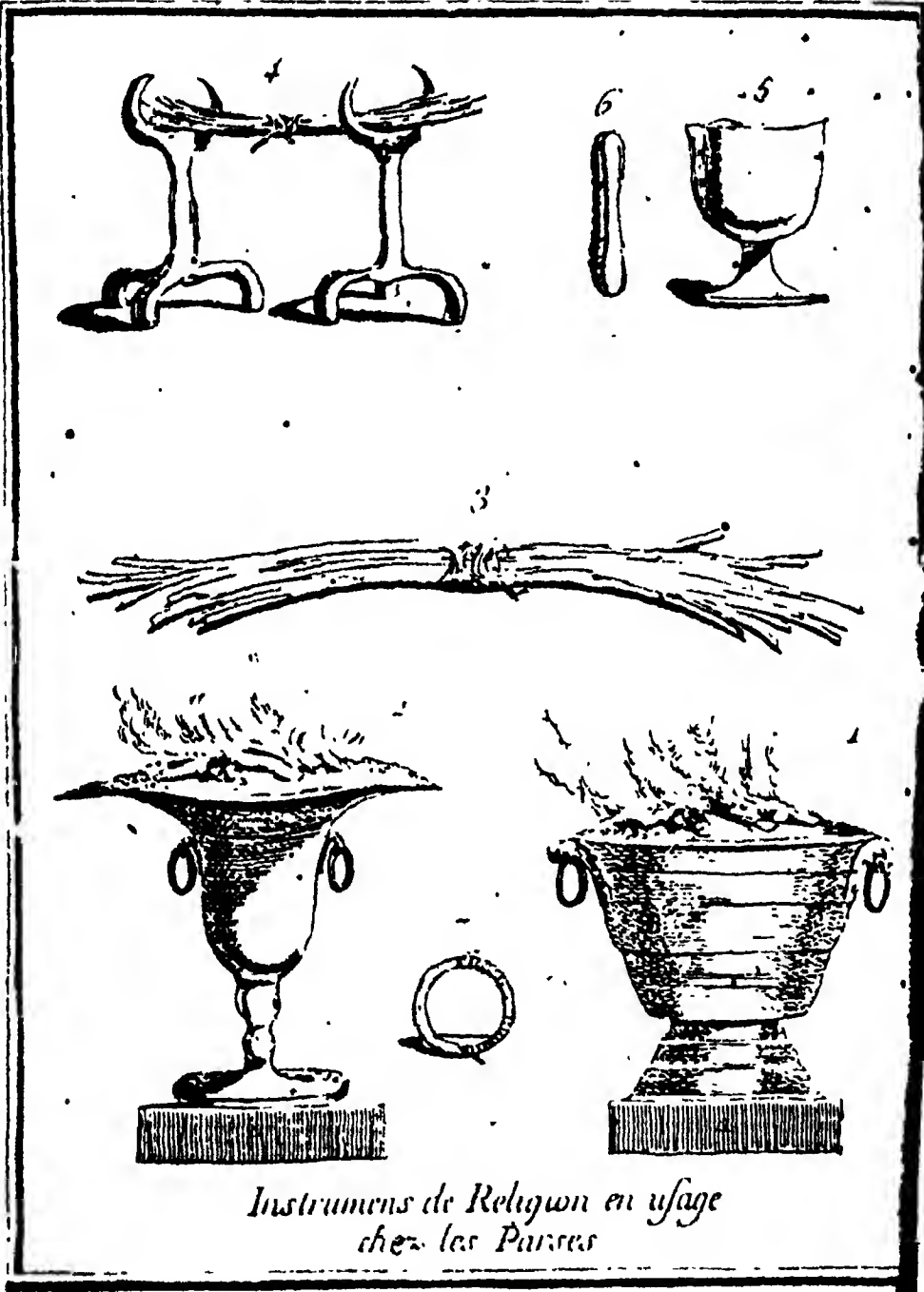
Besides Perron's *Avesta*, Blake, while working on *The New System*, must have referred to the other works reproduced by Bryant. First among these is the oft-quoted Kaempfer whose *Amoenitatum Exoticarum* provides, besides the text, a large number of magnificent plates which were copied by later scholars. These plates can be rivalled perhaps only by the 'Three hundred and twenty' copper plates of M. Cornelius Le Bruyn who in his travels was particularly impressed by the "noble ruins of Persepolis." Available to Blake in an English translation, this book gives besides the plates "delinated on the spot," a close description of Persepolis "Naxi-Rustam" and a discussion of the objects portrayed. It is here that the controversy began about "the little figure that appears in the air," the Fravashi. "Mr. Hyde takes [it] for a soul that has the same habit and ornaments . . . of the King below it [while] for my part, I think this figure may properly signify an oracle." For Le Bruyn the other common symbol of the faith is "The sun [which] represents the ancient divinity of the Persians (See Plates 33-38).⁹⁰ Bryant

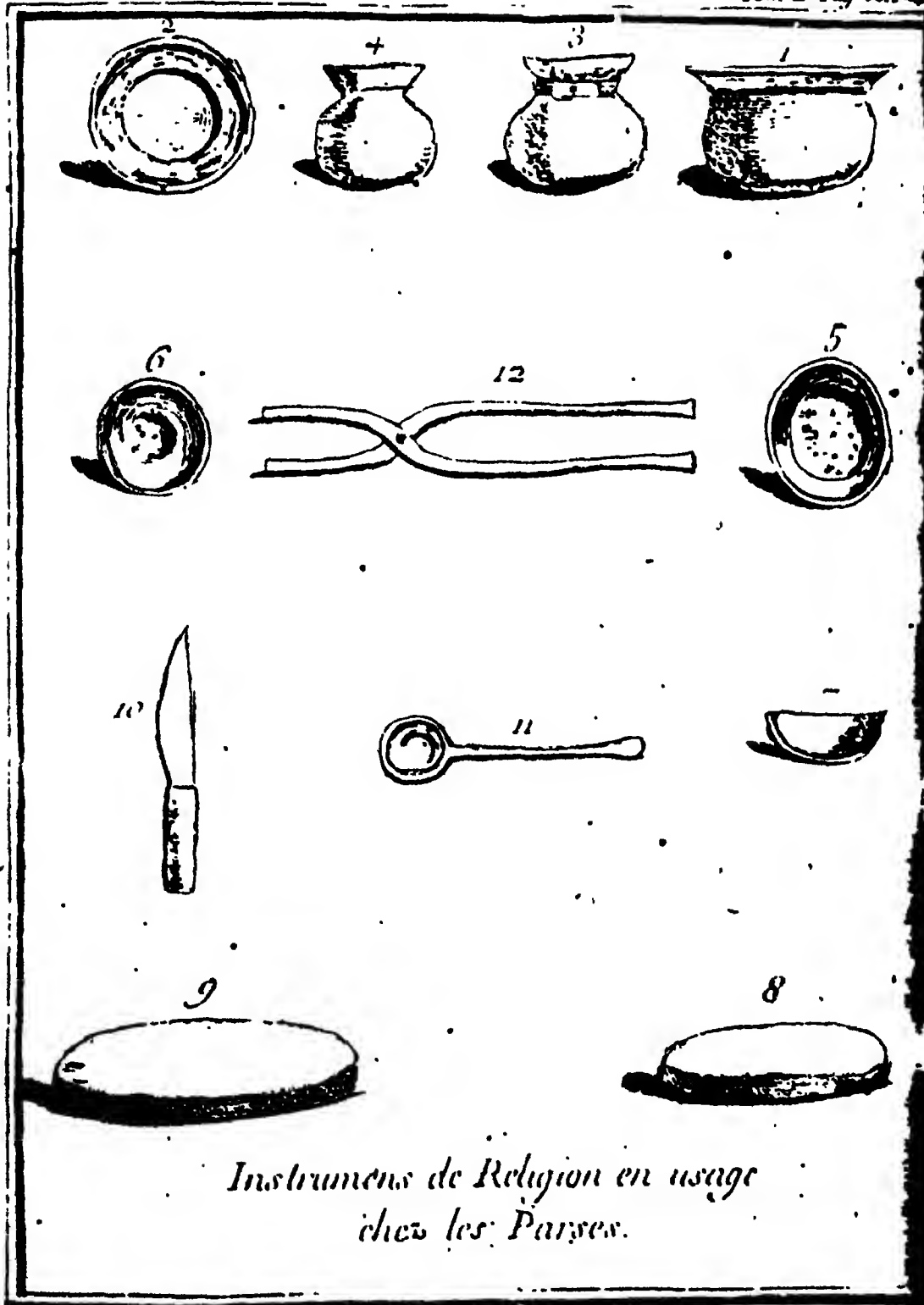


Parsee achevant la Priere du Kusti.

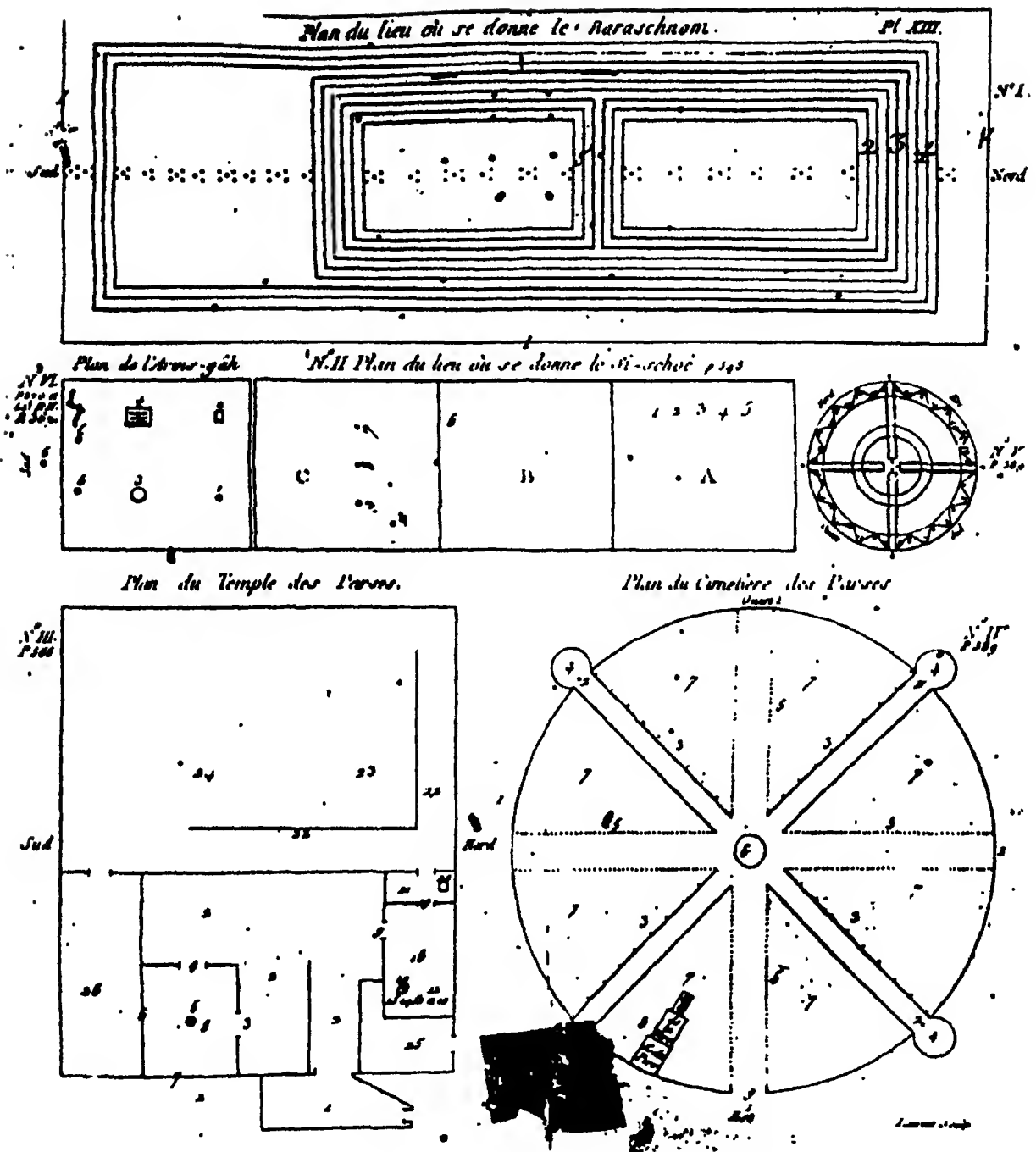
Pl. 27

A Zoroastrian wearing the Sudreh or Sacred shirt and sacred girdle or Kusti. From Perron.



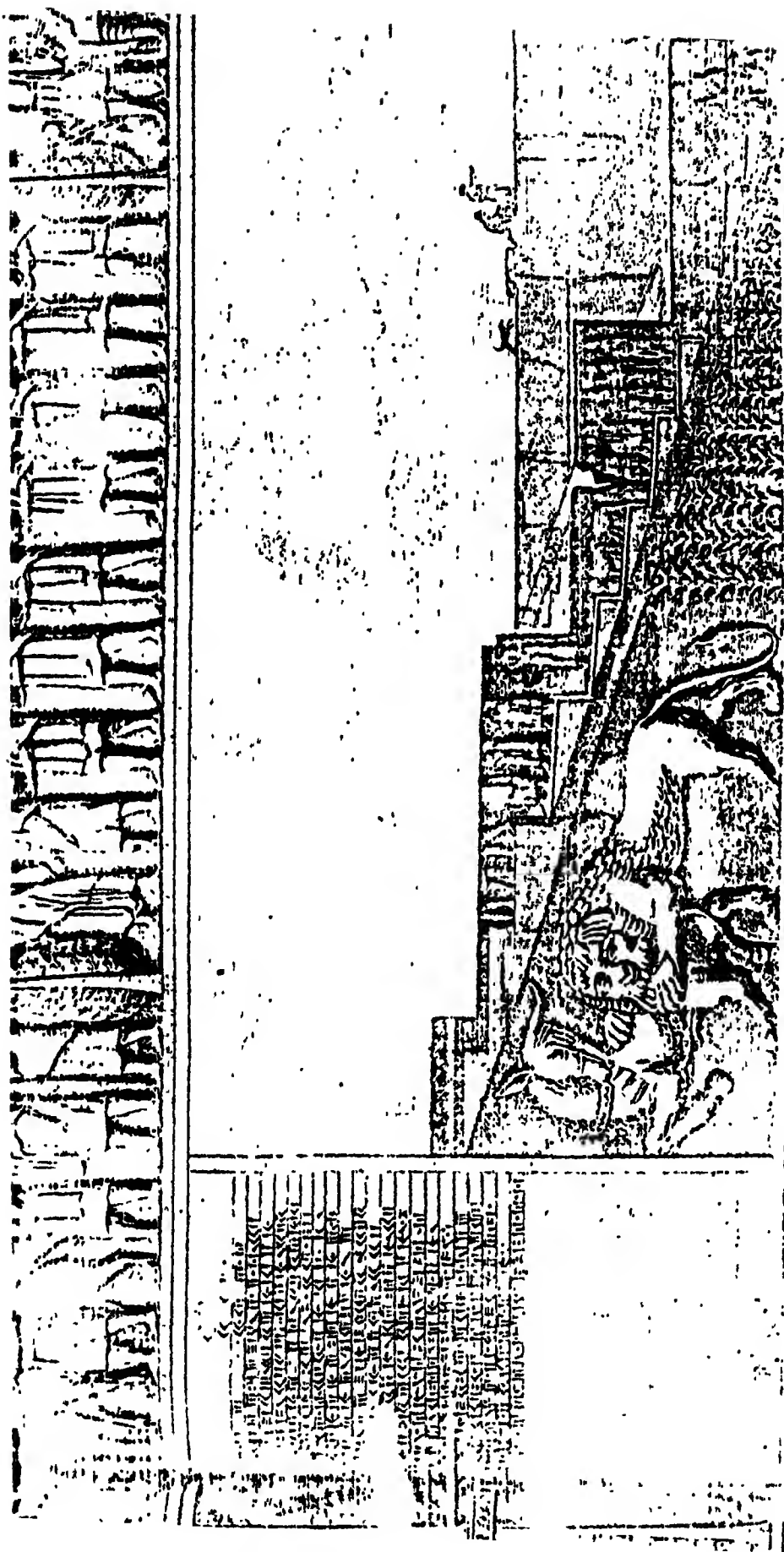


*Instruments de Religion en usage
chez les Parses.*

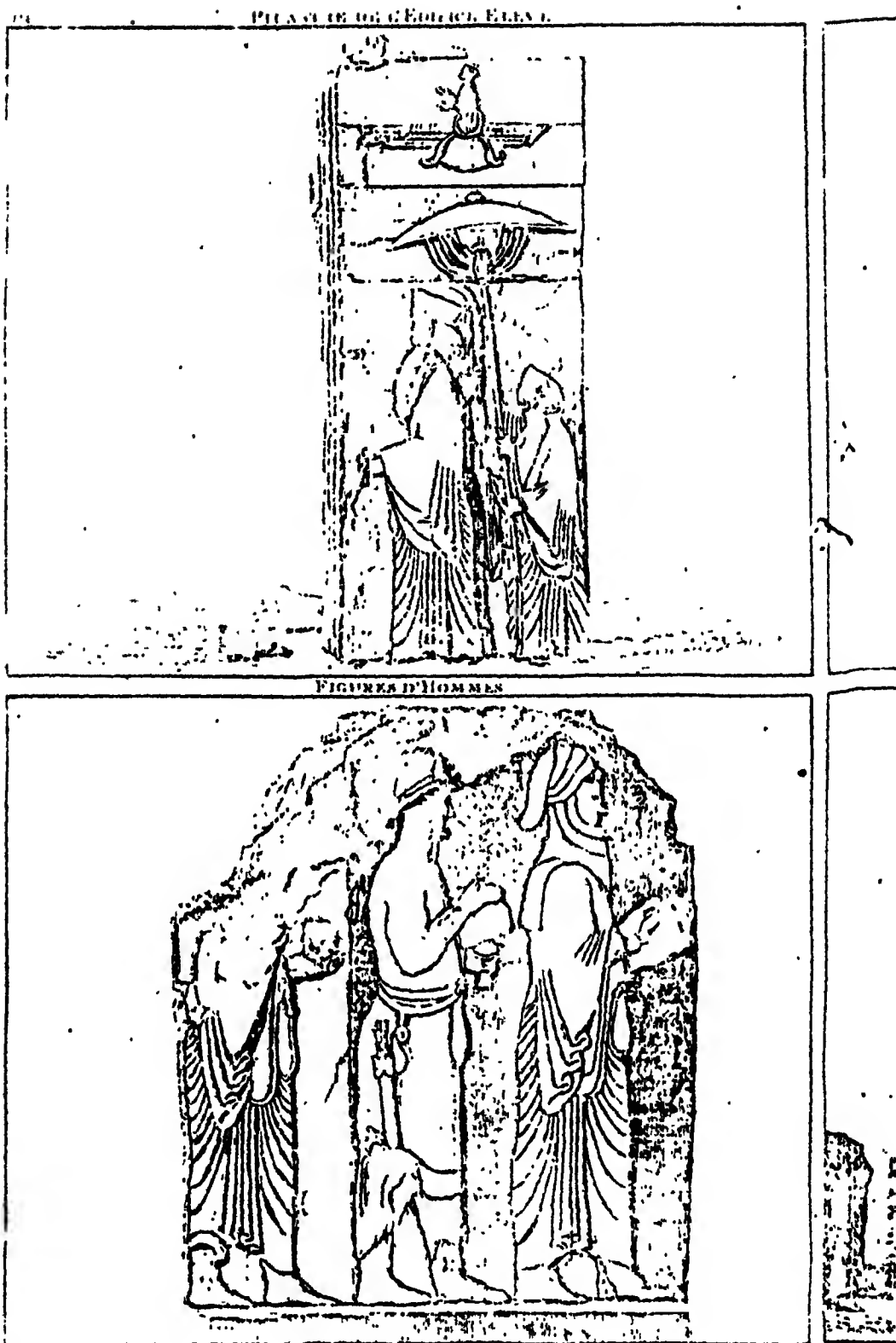


Pl. 30

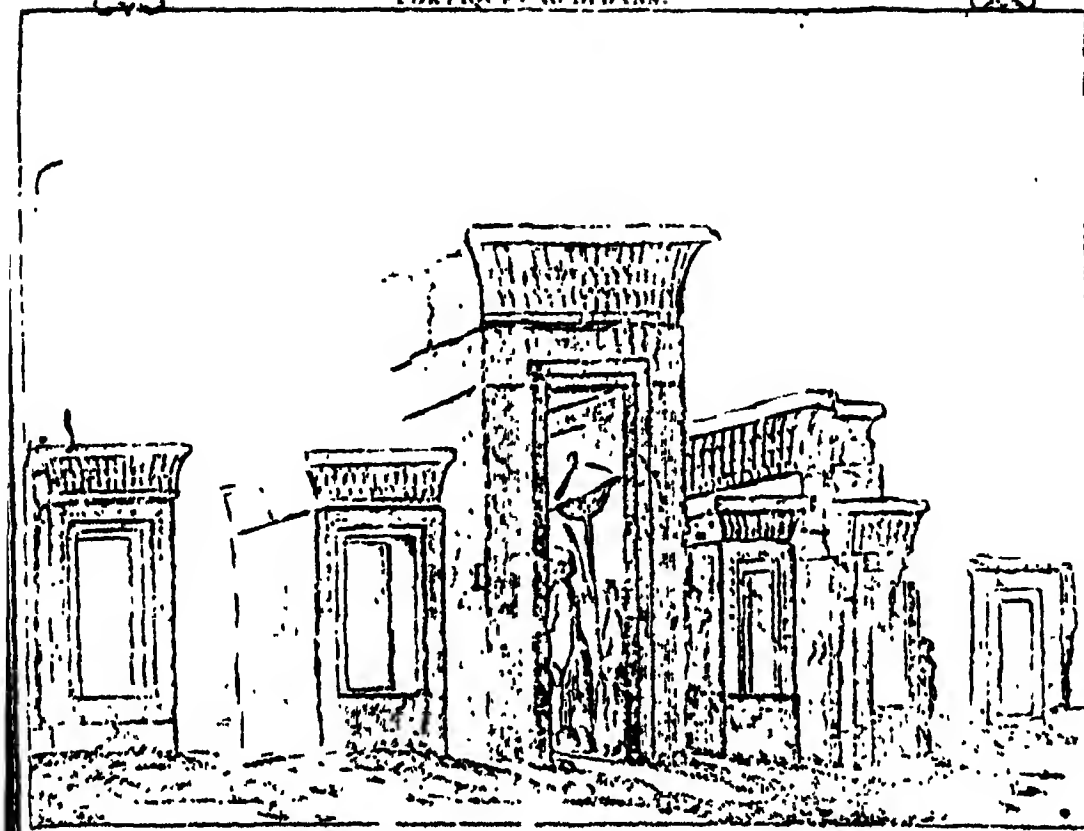
Plans of Fire Temple, The Towers of Silence, and ceremonies of Zoroastrians from Perron.



Pl. 33 *Le Bruyn Scene from Persepolis.*



Pl. 34 The Fravashi floats above the King, Persepolis, from *Le Bruyn*. Blake copied the first picture.



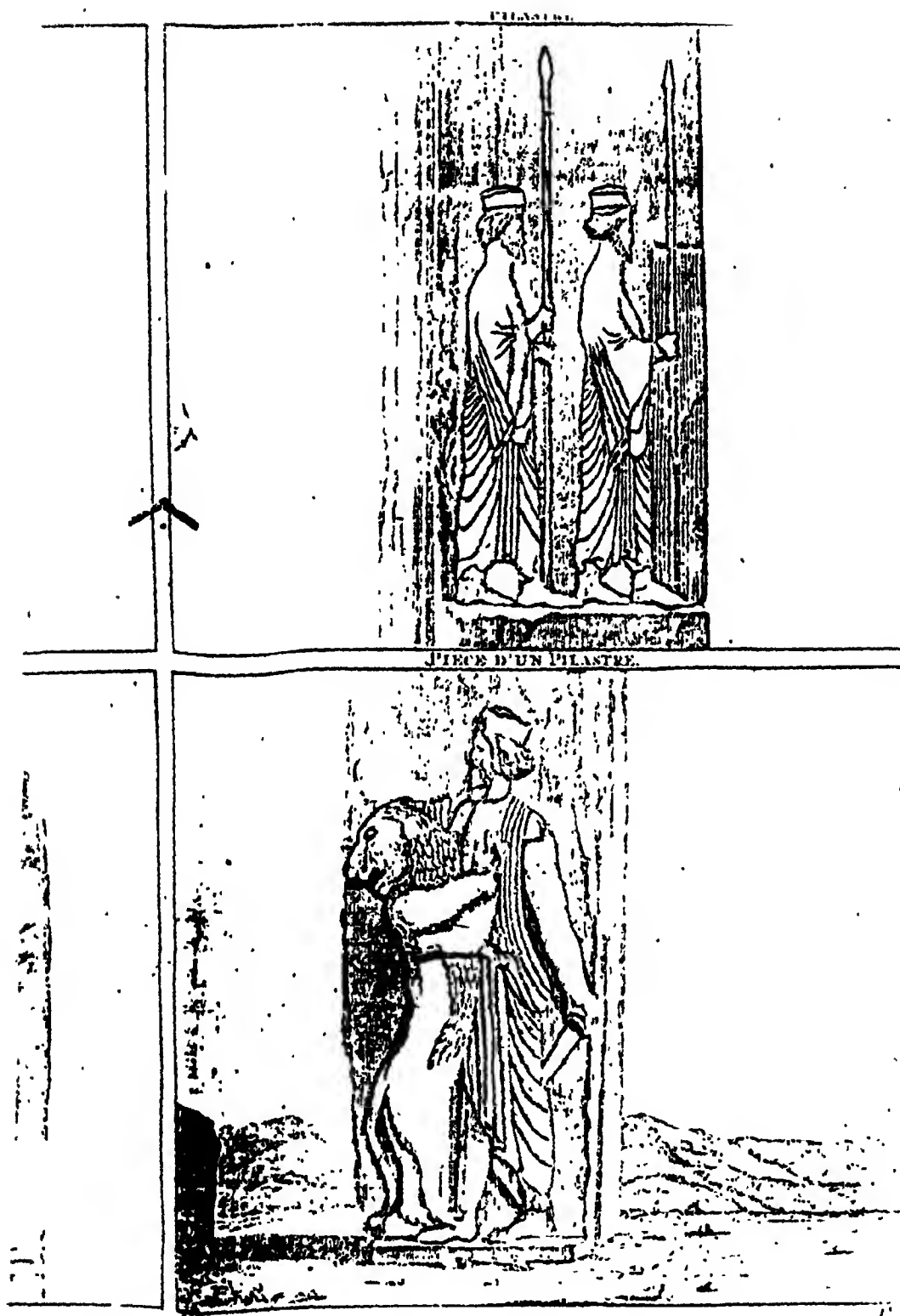
all the other windows. The sculpture of them appears as perfect, as if they were but newly carved, as is evinced by those fragments of them, which I brought away with me; and this circumstance may be ascribed to the hardness of the stone on which they were impressed.

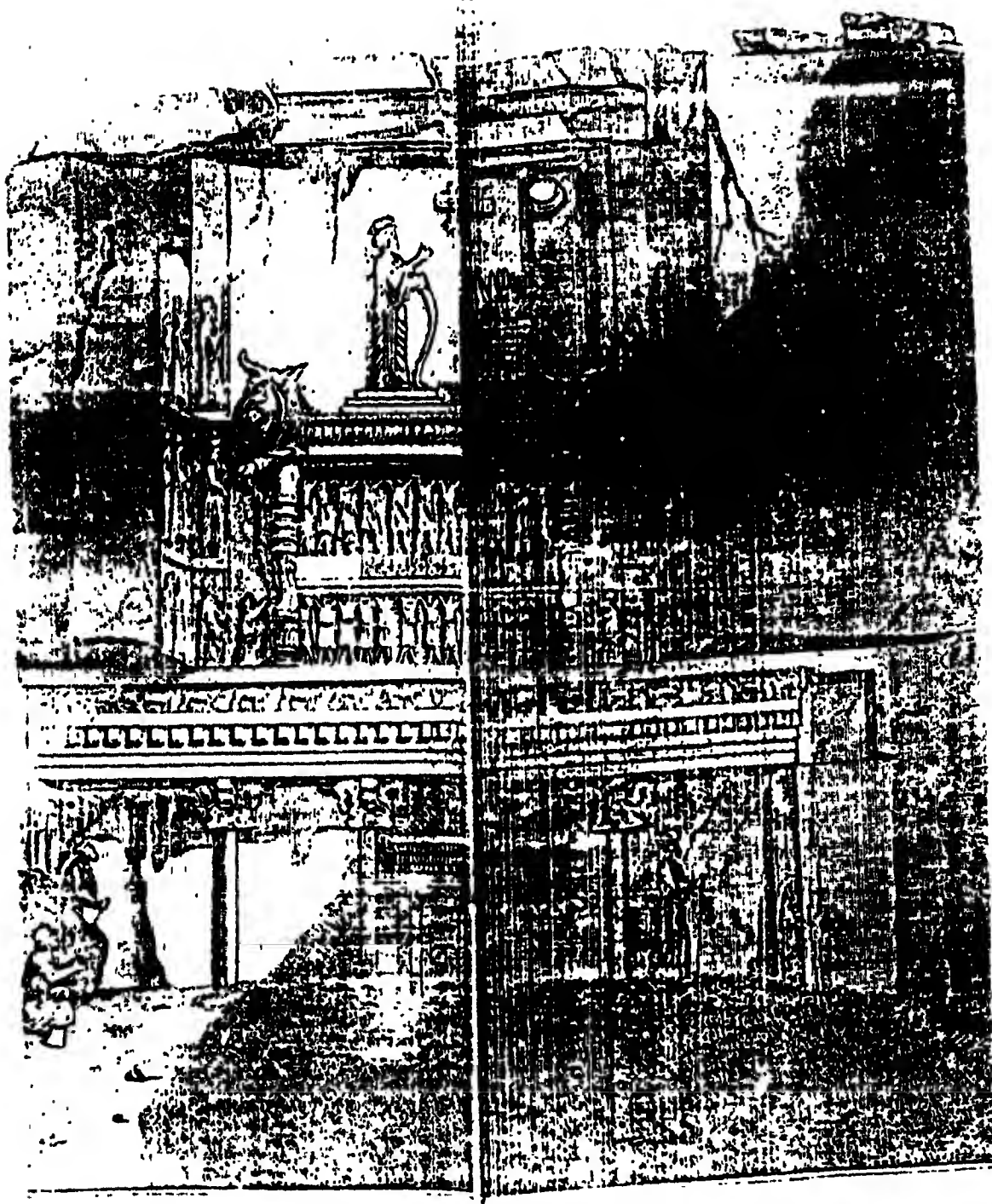
I found, within the opening of one of these windows, several other characters less ancient than the others, and which have been carved here them. They are *Arabic* letters, and are exhibited on the left side of plate 135, and on the right of plate 136, together with their explanation.

As to the other characters of great antiquity, they are no longer known, and I made every diligent attempt to obtain copies of them; but without success, as they were in such a state of decay, that no person, who could decipher them, knew how to copy them. I, therefore, made a copy of them, as they are now, and I have placed them in the margin of the plates, to show that

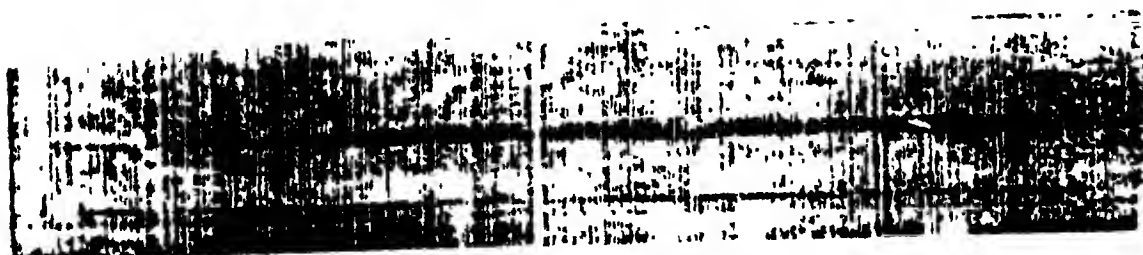
being at the pains to copy them exactly, in hopes of meeting with some priest among the *Guebres*, who could afford me some light with relation to them, and the event shall be related at large in the sequel of this work.

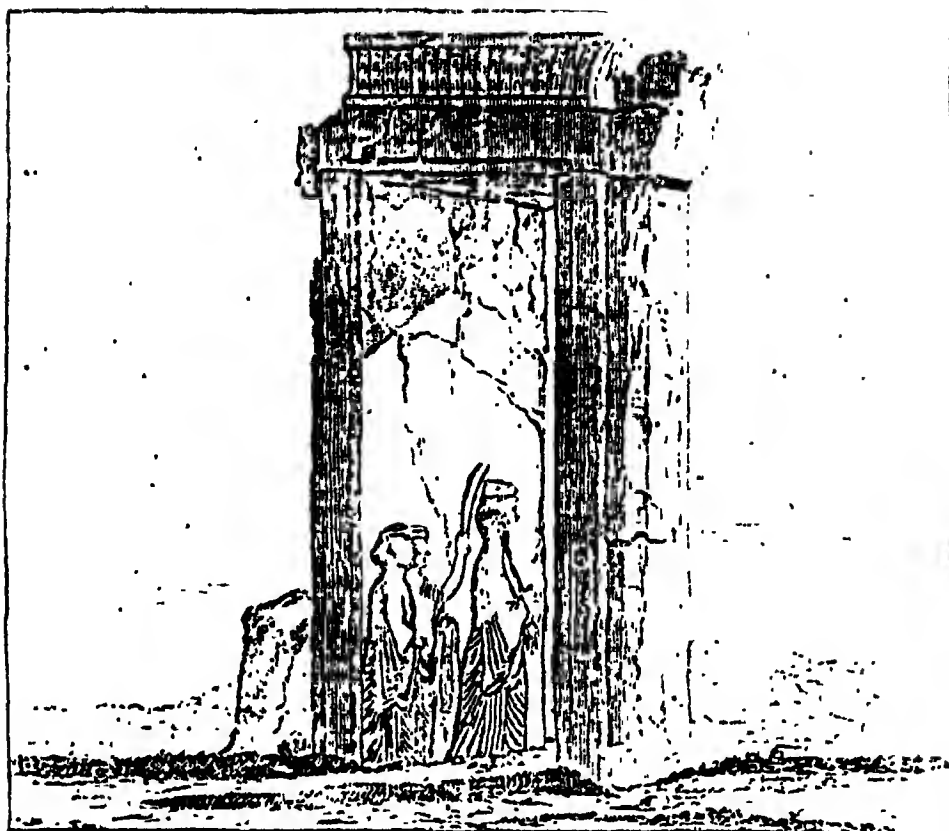
My ardent desire to examine these superb ruins with the greatest care, and to render them more known to the Europeans than they had been till then, caused me to send for a stone-cutter at *Zic-rues*, or *Cunat*, whose assistance I had occasion for in the execution of my design; the hardness of the rocks having blunted all the chisels I had brought from *Japan*, so that they were no longer useful to me. This person however succeeded no better than my self, and all his instruments were soon reduced to the same condition as mine, though they were much larger and heavier. Notwithstanding which, my earnest desire to convey some idea of them





Pl. 37 *Le Bruyn.* The tombs at Naqsh-i-Rustam.





L'ORTHOUS.



Pl. 38 Le Bruyn. Persepolis.

also discusses and uses the *Travels* of the Chevalier Chardin which ran into various editions. The later editions have comparisons between what Chardin saw as a traveller of the Guebres in Persia with what Anquetil found in "Guzarate"(Gujarat) and like Monsieur de Thevenot, another of Bryant's sources, he too concentrated greatly on the bas-reliefs of "Nakchi-Rustom."⁹¹

While Bryant has used material from all the sources discussed so far, Blake had, in his time, possible access to what even today seems an incredibly vast and surprisingly accurate amount of information relevant to our subject. Snowballing into a large corpus are cross references in many books. Some of the larger "Collections" of travels reproduce in their entirety the works of the past and while the antiquarians quote the travellers as bearers of first-hand information, the travellers often cite the antiquarians as dependable authorities. It is not easy to trace the origin of some of these reports because the books ran into several editions and there were often minor changes, omissions or additions; some translators and editors even inserting extra material without giving exact details. The brief survey here can nevertheless show the quantity and quality of material available to the eighteenth-century reader.

The editor and translator of the Latin-writer Friar Jordanus (c. 1330), a very early traveller, feels that his was the first travellers' account of the Parsis of India. These *Wonders of the East* were published in Paris. The account mentions the two Principles, the worship of fire and methods of disposal of the dead, themes which would recur in greater detail in *Collections of the Travels of Ms. Tavernier, Bernier and Others*. This book gives details of Zoroaster's birth and his call, the creation myth and distinctively and powerfully prophesies the end of the world when there:

Shall be universal resurrection, at which time all souls, . . . shall return to
 . . . take possession of their Bodies. They say then shall all the Mountains
 and all the Minerals in the world be melted and shall fill up the great
 . . . chaos of Hell whereby the mansion of the Devils be utterly destroyed . . .
 The world shall be levell'd and be made fit to inhabit.

The apocalyptic and the mundane intermingle, for we have along with this prophecy, traditional methods of disposing of nails and cut hair, details regarding ceremonies, the importance given to dogs, criticism of Alexander's destructive madness and references to a way of life noted obviously from personal observation. This book contrasts favourably with Sir Andrew Ramsay whose *New Cyropaedia* takes Cyrus on travels which reveal "The religious manners and policy of several countries," in the course of which far-fetched love stories mix with some genuine knowledge of the Persians. Close details of the laws of the Persians noted by Herodotus and the concept of the two Principles are found in Rev. William Beloe's four volume translation from the Greek while J.Z. Holwell, relating *Interesting Historical Events Relative to the Provinces of Bengal and the Empire of Indostan* tells us that Zardhust and Pythagoras came to India as travellers in search of wisdom. Others too combine information on Persia with that on India, regarding the term "East Indies" as a convenient way of discussing both lands.

Such compilations include the *Travels of the Jesuits*, gathered together in English by Lockman who reprints the letters of a Father Dussie writing from Surat to the French missions in China. The same editor gives us d' Herbelot's definition of a Parsi a one who is "a professed worshipper of Fire," and quotes Pietro della Valle, who believing the Parsis to be the only true descendants of the ancient Persians provides a list of the Kings of Persia till the Muhammadan conquest and dispersal to India. Comparisons between the Parsis of India and the Guebres of Persia are found in Sonnerat's *Voyage* and the translation of the Dutchman Stavorinus whose *Voyages* were published in London in

1798. Stavorinus gives close details of the disposal of the dead telling us that he managed secretly to visit the forbidden Towers of Silence while the attendant was absent on a visit to the city. In Volume III of this work we note the first personal account of individual Parsis who had begun socially interacting and working with Europeans. Discussing the claim that the Parsis had kept the original sacred Fire of Iran burning through the centuries, Stavorinus makes an interesting observation, "The religion of the ancient Persians is too well known for me to say much." Ovington in *A Voyage to Suratt* stresses the Parsi practice of charity and notes their diligence and industriousness particularly in the art of silk weaving in Surat, while Thomas Maurice in *The History of Hindostan* borrows plates on fire worship from Hyde and Bryant and continues the discussion on the flying figure of the Fravashi. Volume II of this *History* discusses Mithraism, and Maurice gives us two important visual clues when he tells us that the Persians had two ways of representing the sun in sculpture and painting, "one under the form of a young man . . . and the other in the similitude of a human face radiated." Volume IV of Maurice portrays opposite its title page the Two Principles of Persia. Volume V discusses the Chaldaic oracles with reference to Pythagoras and Volume VI contains a most interesting account of the celebration of the Persian "Navruze" festival in Delhi in 1616, from an account sent by Sir Thomas Roe. Finally in Churchill's *Collection of Voyages*, Volume IV contains the account of Dr. John Francis Gemelli Careri who made notes and sketches of the "Govis" of Persian, and includes a full reprint of Henry Lord's book.⁹²

The account of travellers to Persia must include one more, that of John Henry Grose, who displays a keen awareness of the philosophy of the religion and makes an interesting statement regarding Boehme's indebtedness to Zoroaster's system which unfortunately he does not substantiate. He tells us that Zoroaster's "Fire philosophy is in

a great measure adopted by Jacob Behmen, . . . who almost wholly builds his visionary system of theology upon it."⁹³ John Fryer's account, Ouseley's *Oriental Collection* which also contains Persian stories from the *Shah Namah*, John Ogilby's *Asia*, James Morier, Mandelslo's *Travels*, the *Voyages* of Gaspard Drouville, Gabriel de Chinon and Volumes 8, 9, and 10, of Pinkerton's *Collection*, all include details varying from tiny yet accurate notes on the Zoroastrian respect for the cock (a bird of good omen whose flesh is never eaten) to translations of the Holy Book.⁹⁴ One traveller's account exceptional for the quality of its engravings and descriptions is that of Sir Robert Ker Porter where there are carefully copied details of "The celebrated sculptures and excavations, so long the subjects of discussion with the traveller, the artist and the antiquary."⁹⁵ Plate Forty-eight is of special significance for the Fravashi floating over the king is explained as "The ferwer or prototype of the king" and is accompanied by a quote from the "Desatir":

35. Whatever is on earth is the resemblance and shadow of something that is in the sphere.
36. While that resplendent thing remaineth in good condition, it is well also with its shadow.
37. When that resplendent object removeth far from its shadow life fadeth away.
38. Again, that resplendent thing is the shadow of a light more resplendent than itself.
39. And so on, upto Mez [Ormazd] who is the light of lights.⁹⁶

It is necessary to bear this explanation in mind for this symbol was one of the important visual influences on Blake, appearing in his creative work in a variety of forms right upto his final epic *Jerusalem*. Nora K. Firby in a thesis submitted to the University of Manchester has examined in detail the perceptions of European travellers regarding



Admodum Reverendo in Christo Patri RICHARDO Divo perm Episcopo
 Petroburgensi hanc Tabulam constitutionis ego lubens
 : : meritoq. D.D.D. Autor T.H. delin. Aldus fecit Ven. Ch.

Pl. 39

Scene of worship from Hyde. Note mouth-coverings used by priest to
 preserve the purity of the Fire.

Zoroastrianism in the seventeenth and eighteenth century and one tends to agree with her conclusion that despite bias, ignorance and misunderstandings, on the whole these reports contain valuable information on the history and nature of Zoroastrianism.⁹⁷

When we turn to the antiquarian-historian accounts regarding Zoroastrianism they often seem, like Bryant, to have a thesis to support in particular, "That all the inhabitants of this globe are sprung from one common stock is a Truth we are obliged by Religion to believe," as says the Abbé Banier.⁹⁸ The stress in Banier's book is on the refinements of the East in arts and sciences at a time when the Greeks were still practically uncivilized. Using Hyde to support his argument on Zoroastrianism he intermingles the doctrines of the Chaldean Oracles with accounts of the Magi. Quoting from Origen, Strabo and Herodotus. Banier vividly describes scenes of worship "The Magi preserved the Fire with the Ashes and went thither every Day to offer up their prayers with the Bundle of Tamarin in their Hands, and their Heads covered with Mitres, whose string hung down over their Faces and Lips (See Plate 39).⁹⁹ Another "antiquarian" Bernard Picart, a French designer and engraver, in an excellent "Dissertation on the Religion of the Persians," traces Zoroastrianism from its decline back to its glory. The myths of Ohrmazd and Ahriman, the World Egg, the Creation and Last Judgment are gathered here from several sources along with numerous engraved plates. While the usual legends of Zoroaster's birth and ministry are recounted along with some glaring mistakes in chronology we also have details of later Zoroastrian and Manichaean heresy. The Ceremonies described include details of the six festivals of creation, and the Commemoration of the dead, the purification necessary after birth, the rites of marriage

and the prayers for the departed.¹⁰⁰

Charles Butler's *Horae Biblicae* contains "a Connected series of Miscellaneous notes on the Koran, the Zend Avesta, the Vedas . . . Kings, and The Edda." Butler in the second part of his book traces the history of Zoroastrian studies, and while a close study is made of Perron's text, details of the *Yashts* and *Yasna* are also provided along with discussions on the religion as found in Shahrastani's treatise, the *Eulma-Eslam*, the *Sadder Bundahishn*, and the Zurvan theory. Stories regarding the primeval ox and first man and woman are accompanied by lessons in morality, injunctions to make the earth more fruitful "to honour parents, respect old age . . . practise universal benevolence."¹⁰¹

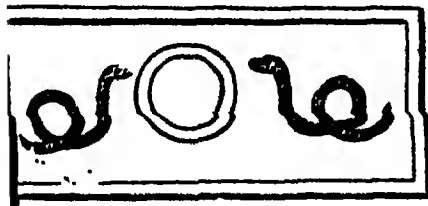
Similar information is found in Priestley's *Comparison of the Institutions of Moses with Those of the Hindoos*; in Prideaux's *History* which however regards the Prophet as a dangerous "imposter . . . skilled in the learning of the East." Basnage's *History of the Jews* like Prideaux recounts Zoroaster's sagacity only to challenge it as false, while on the other hand R.P. Knight in his *Inquiry* and Edward Davies in *Celtic Researches* regard the Persian as the most pure of races. Davies goes on to stress the close analogies between the Celts and the Magi an idea emphasised even more by William Stukeley in his *Abury*. Blake knew Stukeley's work and Stukeley's Plate seen here traces the Fravashi symbol in its different manifestations (See Plate 40). Stukeley's serpent temples were a direct influence on Blake who perhaps having seen and worked on the plate first in Bryant, uses the idea finally in *Jerusalem*. Bishop Burnett's, *Sacred Theory of the Earth*, Craufurd's *Researches*, James Forbes beautifully illustrated *Oriental Memoirs*, Ogilvie's account of the Persian faith, Bayle's *Dictionnaire* and Bailly's *Letters* to Voltaire all contain, to a lesser or greater extent knowledge of the religious, social and historical aspects of the Persian faith.¹⁰²



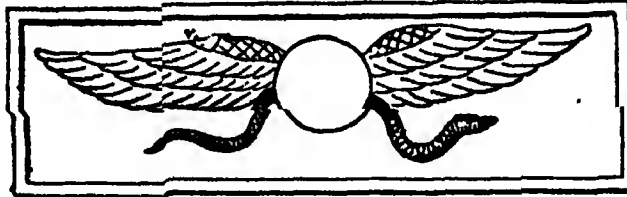
From a Kilmoryer.



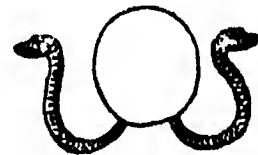
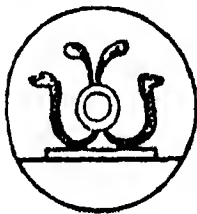
From the tomb of Bryn.



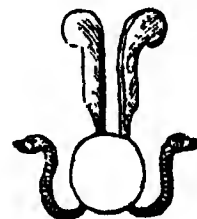
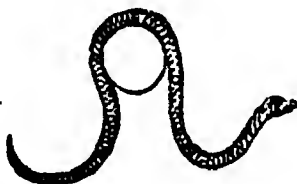
From Chinese coins.



From the charms of a Vedic priest.



From the Guc Table.



Apart from the writings of Travellers and Antiquarians a third type of book, which frequently used the word "Zoroaster" was also available to Blake and the eighteenth-century public. These authors who can be loosely gathered under the term "alchemists," explored the sacred mysteries and the occult. Often bizarre and divorced from genuine Zoroastrian doctrine, they frequently attribute their knowledge to the Magi, and Mithra, and cite "Zoroaster" very freely. Study groups gathered to read such mysteries and Blake is even said to have received initiation into a group called "The Hermetic Students of the G.D.," while his contemporary, the miniature painter Cosway held regular studies in the practice of magic.¹⁰³ George Stanley Faber while discussing the mysteries of the Cabiri digresses into Mithraism and Zoroastrian worship in natural caves and grottoes,¹⁰⁴ while Agrippa, who regards Zoroaster as the inventor of the science of magic, discusses in considerable detail the philosophical aspects of Fire. Like other alchemists he ascribes to Zoroaster the "oracles" which were to influence a number of occultists.¹⁰⁵ Robert Fludd, Francis Barrett, Thomas Vaughan and Paracelsus¹⁰⁶ all combine apocryphal "oracles" and "mysteries" with some genuine ideas in their discussions on the Magi and "Zoroaster."

Most famous of the alchemical-apocryphal works were the Chaldean oracles of Zoroaster available to Blake in Thomas Stanley's *The History of the Chaldaick Philosophy*. Stanley repeats much that the Greeks had reported on Zoroaster and his rites particularly those of fire worship and in the latter half of his book prints the *Oracles* with the expositions of Pletho and Psellus. Stanley tells us that the original oracles were first published by Ludovicus Tilentanus in 1563 at Paris together with the commentaries of Gemistus Pletho under the title of *The Magical Oracles of the Magi descendent from Zoroaster* and were then translated and presented by various commentators.¹⁰⁷

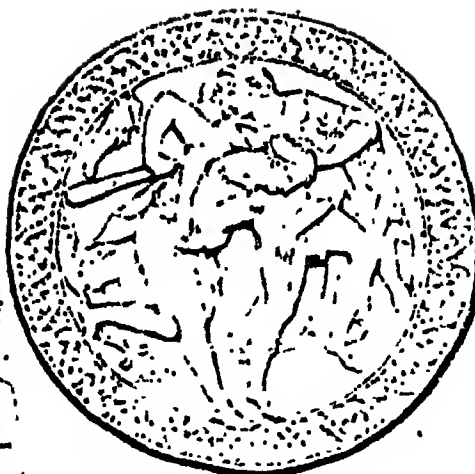
Stanley's publication of these oracles was an attempt to codify for the European audience a legendary source of wisdom. These oracles, so dear to the alchemists, actually date about the end of the Second century A.D. They are a heterogeneous mass of Zoroastrian, Platonic, Gnostic and Pythagorean matter. Today seen as spurious, they received serious attention in the past, and while Stanley does give some genuine information on Persian worship, an incomplete and confused structure and derivation from numerous sources makes them difficult to examine as a system of thought.¹⁰⁸ Stanley follows the "oracles" translated by Marthanus and edited by Psellus, Patricius translated them finally in 1593. So far it has been believed that such "oracles" are a total fabrication unrelated to original doctrines. But even though Zoroastrian scholars refuse to discuss them at all Stanley's English translation of Pletho's "Exposition of the more obscure passages" contains several genuinely Zoroastrian symbols and ideas while the list of aphorisms contained in it is reminiscent of the later Pahlavi collections as also Blake's style of aphorism.¹⁰⁹

III

Blake as we have just seen, had access to a vast amount of literature on Zoroaster and the Persians, and had probably worked on Zoroastrian plates in the formative years of his creative existence. If however we require further proof of Blake's personal exposure to Zoroastrianism and knowledge of Persian themes we must turn to Abraham Rees whose book *The Cyclopaedia or Universal Dictionary* was "illustrated by the most distinguished artists." From the point of view of Blake studies it is one of the most interesting of the eighteenth-century antiquarian accounts. Blake was indebted to Flaxman for the commission to engrave the plates for Rees's 39 Volume *Cyclopaedia*



Durga Slaying Mahishasura, a Hindu group.



An Egyptian Patera in the British Museum



A Colossal Statue at Thebes



Greek Sculpture, at Persepolis



A Chinese Statue



Persian Sculpture, at Persepolis

Published for the Art Library, 1816. Engraved by J. B. for the Art Library, 1816.



Persian Sculpture. at Persepolis

Pl. 42

Blake. Hunting scene from Persepolis.



Pl. 43

Persepolis. The King with his Fravashi floating overhead signed Blake sculp.

which was finally published in 79 parts between 1802-1820. Blake's illustrations were for articles written by Flaxman on armour, bas-relief, gem-engraving and sculpture, for which he had to work at The Antique School of The Royal Academy. Volumes I, II, III and IV of *Plates* all contain engravings signed by Blake. Blake's familiarity with the Persian tradition can be seen in Volume IV of the plates (*Sculpture*) where there are two signed plates entitled "Persian Sculpture at Persepolis"(See Plate 41-43)¹¹⁰. Le Bruyn and Robert Ker Porter both portray the same scenes but as the date of Blake's plate as noted under the engraving is March 1, 1816, it pre-dates the publication of Porter's book and is very likely to have been copied from Le Bruyn's study. One of the engravings contains the symbol of the Fravashi which so many earlier writers had discussed.

We have briefly seen how Blake used the image of the Angels with arms upraised and crossed taken from a frieze at Persepolis which he had first found in Bryant. Blake must have also seen, if not engraved, the serpent symbols, reproduced by Bryant (See Plate 40). As already mentioned, Stukeley had in *Abury* a plate entitled "The Antient Symbols of the deity" where he like Bryant had copied various versions of the winged 'disk' and serpent. Blake was very influenced by this design. Perhaps because this, Stukeley's "Sacred heirogram," identified the serpent with the Sun, Blake uses the serpent form for Orc, son of Los the redeemer.¹¹¹ This image of the winged disk common to many middle-Eastern civilizations developed over the ages into a major Zoroastrian motif, that of the Fravashi and it seems to have caught Blake's imagination.

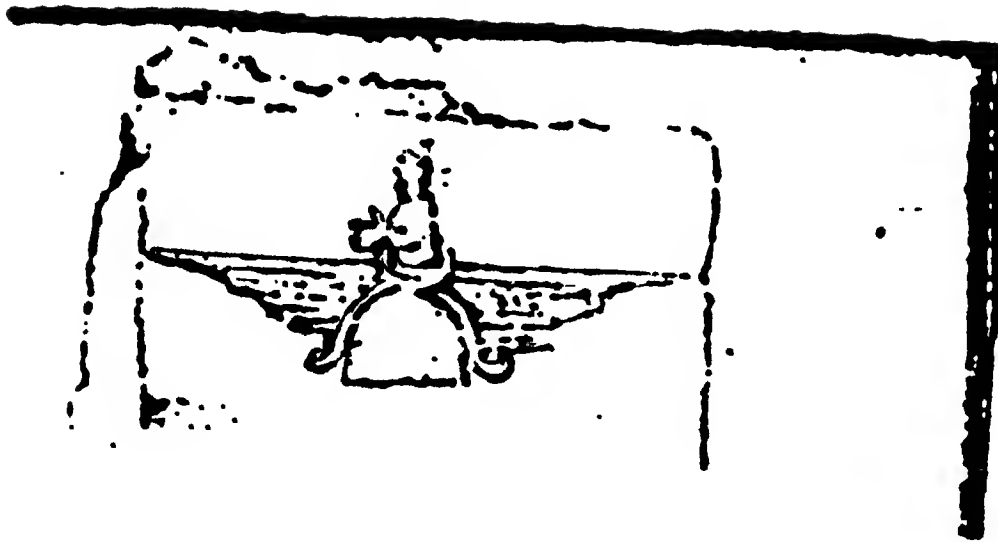
A symbol evokes different responses in different people, races and ages. It can evoke a different response in even the same audience depending on the way it is used and while in Zoroastrianism this winged symbol is always positive Blake seems to adopt a dualistic approach towards this, the Fravashi, symbol of a "dualistic" religion. It is

interesting to note that Blake's entire attitude towards the ancient Persian faith seems to be marked by this ambivalence. While his appreciation of the magnificence of Persian sculpture has already been noted in his reference in the *Descriptive Catalogue*, on the other hand in *The Annotations to Boyd's Dante* he tells us that "Persians destroy temples and are praised for it" (K., p. 413) and in his *Notes on the Illustrations to Dante* he tells us that "The Poetry of the Heathen [is] stolen and Perverted from the Bible, not by Chance but by design, by the Kings of Persia and their generals, the Greek Heroes and lastly the Romans" (K., p. 785).

This ambivalent approach is typical of all the writers and thinkers of Blake's time, for their appreciation of the Orient seemed always accompanied by self-doubt and even a need to prove their actual loyalties to the Christian tradition. So even when Blake was to use, as we will see, ideas, symbols and myths from another tradition, it would be an oblique usage with clues given for inferences drawn rather than a direct acknowledgement. The method too is typical of the man, and of all mysteries, for to quote Picco della Mirandola:

It was the opinion of theologians . . . that divine subjects and the secret mysteries must not be rashly divulged . . . that is why the Egyptians had sculptures of sphinxes in all their temples, to indicate that divine knowledge, if committed to writing at all, must be covered with enigmatic veils and poetic dissimulation.¹¹²

To return to the Fravashi symbol; in our own age regarded by modern revivalists as the most characteristic Zoroastrian symbol, it is seen from ancient times hovering in the air above the kings on the Persepolis reliefs and sculptures. The design of a circle with a wing on either side was originally Egyptian, occasionally it had the addition of a



Pl. 44 Close-up of Fravashi engraved by Blake.

bird-like tail or the sacred snakes of its original. The Assyrians added a bearded male figure to its upper half, and set the figure in a ring representing the disc of the sun. The Persians amalgamating all these details used it as one of their main symbols in Achaemenian art. The Fravashi occurs first in the inscription of Darius at Behistun and is then repeatedly used on the walls of the palaces and tombs. Mary Boyce describes in detail what is in all probability the same sculpture that Blake had copied:

There are . . . sculptures which show him [Darius's grandson Artaxerxes I] as a stately figure followed by two smaller attendants. He carries a sceptre in one hand, a three-lobed flower in the other. One of the attendants holds a parasol over the king's head; and above it floats the winged symbol. . . . [which] holds the ring of divinity in one hand, and has the other raised in salutation (See Plate 43-44).¹¹³

The winged figure seen floating above the king in this sculpture becomes at Persepolis a figure of veneration, seen as either the Fravashi of the king or as representative of Ahura Mazda himself. It is more likely to be the former as in portraiture it is the mirror-image of the king beneath, and the Persians have no definite traditional images ascribed to the Godhead. A third possibility is that it could also be a visual representation of the 'Khvarenah' or divine grace--the kingly glory. In *Yasht XIII* it is said of the Fravashis' of the faithful, that when invoked "They come flying unto him, it seems as if they were well-winged birds" and Ahura Mazda himself praises, "The vigour and strength, the glory, the help and the joy that are in the Fravashis of the faithful."¹¹⁴ These spiritual prototypes are also protective guardian spirits, each aspect of creation having its own Fravashi, which existed before the material creation and will continue to exist after death. In the *Annotations to Swedenborg's Divine Love* Blake makes a remark which seems to have some bearing in this context, "Think of a white cloud as being holy, you cannot love it; but think of a holy man within the cloud, love

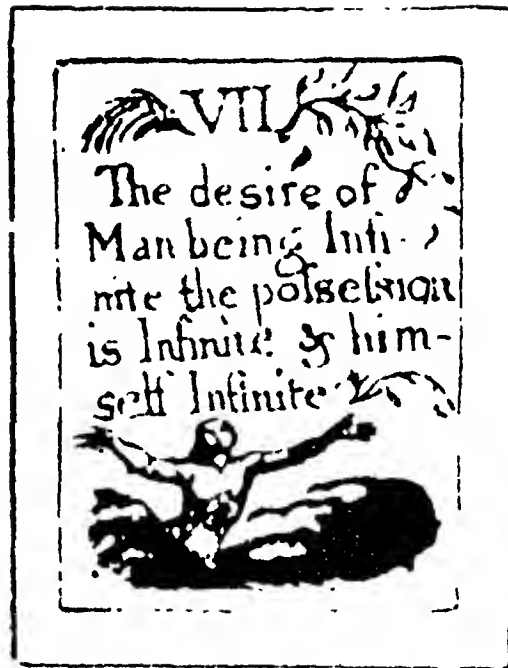
springs up in your thoughts"(K., p. 90).

This symbol of the Fravashi was to be transformed and used very often by Blake in his creative work. In his artistic career Blake repeated certain motifs and visuals images creating for himself a personalised pictorial language which complemented the individualistic visions of his poems. Among these "visionary forms" is the frequently used image of a flying or floating figure with outstretched arms. Janet A. Warner notes that, "of the various visual images in Blake's designs, this gesture is probably the most frequently observed." She goes on to say that such figures can be seen normally in four positions; standing, seated or kneeling, hovering with only head and arms visible, and prostrate.¹¹⁵ These figures do not fit into the traditional Christian images of self sacrifice and death suggested by arms outstretched upon the Cross, but seem to have a dual purpose; for good as well as for evil, a sustaining regenerative spirit and in sharp contrast, as indications of mental and spiritual tyranny. If Zoroastrianism was the religion which stressed the dualities of Ohrmazd and Ahriman, Blake, too, as we see in the illustrations to his texts, uses this figure to personify man at his spiritual extremes--Albion and Satan. Its negative aspect is the Urizenic batwinged spectre, recalling Jupiter Pluvius. Although this will be taken up in detail in later chapters here just one such illustration from the later works can explain this statement. Plate 33 [37]D (See Plate 45)¹¹⁶ of *Jerusalem* has two drawings. The upper section shows Albion tenderly upheld by Jesus, the whole supported by a winged disk. The lower section has Albion sunk in a death-like sleep, he "vegetates" on a rock and hovering over him is a terrible spectre with batlike wings and a malevolent aspect. The contrast is clearly between the good creation upheld by the Divine Spirit and the Destructive Spirit, cause of evil and death. While in Zoroastrianism, the winged disk is positive and has no destructive purpose, Blake's dualistic use of this symbol of a religion which he knew to be deeply concerned with the contraries of good and evil seems to be psychologically apt. Blake

Pl. 45

Blake's dualistic use of the Flying figure from *Jerusalem*.





Pl. 46

There is No Natural Religion.

could also be stressing the fact that man contains elements of divinity within himself but it is up to each individual to preserve this goodness by exercising right choice, and all too easy to stray away toward the everpresent elements of evil.

In his early writings Blake has used the arms outstretched gesture as having associations with Divine Grace in a variety of fashions. In Plate Seven of *There is no Natural Religion* a figure aspires upwards accompanying the proposition "The desire of man being infinite the possession is Infinite and himself infinite" and in *All Religions are One* Principle One and Seven are illustrated by a bearded hovering form, arms outstretched who is associated with "The True Man" or Poetic Genius. Principle One makes a comment very similar to the idea of the Fravashi as a spiritual prototype:

That the Poetic genius is the *True Man* and that the body or *Outward-form* of Man is derived from the Poetic genius. Likewise that the *forms* of all Things, are derived from their genius, which by the Ancients was call'd Angel and Spirit and Demon.

Principle Seven takes us back to those Antiquarians on whom Blake relied for so much of his knowledge;

As all Men are alike (tho' infinitely various) so all Religions and - , as all similars, have one Source. The true Man is the Source, he being the Poetic genius.

(K., 98) (Sec Plates 46-47)¹¹⁷

This creative aspect of Blake's "Poetic Genius" can be paralleled by the "Vigour and strength, the glory, the help and the joy that are in the Fravashis of the faithful"

(*F. Yasht I*, 19).¹¹⁸ In other Blakean texts we will be able to find instances of how he developed and changed this symbol.

The second plate from Persepolis (Plate 42), engraved by Blake, picturing combat with a lion comes from one of the more general scenes on the Persepolis walls. Mary Boyce sees it as the emblem of the "hero triumphant," a motif which appears in several doorways and relief carvings.¹¹⁹ It portrays a man in Persian dress with the royal square-bread engaged in battle with a lion whom he holds with one hand and stabs with the other. This second plate seems more the traditional motif of a celebration of royal power than symbolic. Blake was however rather interested in another image from Persepolis; that of the man-headed bulls. The bull for Zoroastrians is a symbol of powerful force and it appears thus on a number of the columns of Persepolis. The symbol of the bulls of Persepolis attracted the attention of Anthony Blunt, who ascribed their origin to a plate taken from Ouseley's *Travels*, of which the second volume dealing with Persia was published in 1821, while Blake was still working on *Jerusalem*. As we have seen in Plates 10 to 12 the enormous winged, human headed bulls of Persepolis were to become the focal point in one of Blake's most powerful plates usually called "The Chariot of Inspiration." Blunt also notes another example of Persian influence in the Dante drawing No. 61 where Nimrod seems to be a copy of the head from Persepolis engraved in Ouseley's *xliv* Plate.¹²⁰

The fire altars of the Job designs, and the flames of creativity leaping heavenward are seen on numerous pages of Blake's writing. Other researchers have noted this; Dr. Kathleen Raine recognises the particular importance given to the engravings of Persian

cave-temples and indications of fire worship in Bryant's study. She believes Blake may have worked on some of these plates and while we note that Bryant had drawn on Porphyry for textual details the etchings are those of Persepolis and Naqsh-e-Rostam.¹²¹

Blake in *The Descriptive Catalogue* had confirmed these influences when he ascribed the pictures of Nelson and Pitt to "The Apotheoses of Persian . . . Antiquity" and told us that he had been in vision to ancient Asia to "see those wonderful originals . . . sculptured and painted on walls." In all his life as he says he has only endeavoured "to emulate the grandeur" (K, p. 565) of this great vision.

IV

Besides the books, plates and engravings on Persia to which Blake had been exposed we also have a rather unusual account by a twentieth-century Indian poet and visionary, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, who tells us that he:

Stumbled across a passage in a book on Blake which described the few books that he had access to in his friends library . . . and incidentally talked of the interest in the East . . . awakened in Blake by a beautiful but richly painted bowl with the legend of Sa'ddi the Persian poet, with some of his famous couplets inscribed round its border.¹²²

While this reference is not verifiable, David A. Pailin in a carefully researched study on *Attitudes to Other Religions: Comparative Religion in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Britain*¹²³ shows us that attitudes of even the most enlightened of the eighteenth-century tended to be coloured by inherent notions if not by prejudice. Nevertheless Sir William Jones, one of the most influential of all orientalist placed the

origin of humanity in Iran.¹²⁴ Thus, despite the prejudices of his age in favour of Judaeo-Christian revelation Blake had, through authorities like Jones, and his own wide reading, sufficient support for his use of earlier traditions "Copy for ever is My Rule"(K, 446), Blake wrote, but whatever esoteric or occult or mythological material he used, he interpreted it personally and creatively fusing it into his own system of ideas. It is also to be remembered that while some of the sources for his art seem obscure in the twentieth century, the texts he draws upon are those which all the imaginative schools of European art have always used. Blake regarded many ideas he took from exotic sources as "visions," but to him "Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really and Unchangeably"(L. *Judgment*, K, p. 604) and therefore he always asserted the validity of such knowledge:

For Double the vision my Eyes do see
And a double Vision is always with me.

(*To Butts*, K, p. 817)

To Blake the strange symbols, huge sculptures and legends of a far away land were the magic to set his mind off on its imaginative adventures, giving birth to a creativity which even till today we are still trying to fathom fully; the gifts of the Magi still descend from time immemorial.

Notes

¹ John R. Hinnells, "Zoroastrian Influence on the Judaeo-Christian tradition," *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute*, No. 45 (Bombay 1976), p. 7. Hinnells describes how in 1947, a shepherd boy found, by accident a number of large pots in a cave near the Dead Sea in Jordan. They contained leather manuscripts. Other caves in the area revealed a whole library of a Jewish sect from Israel during the centuries before and after Christ. They reflect ideas very similar to old Zoroastrian beliefs, particularly of the Zurvanite heresy, see in particular *The Community Rule*.

² R.H. Moulton, *Early Zoroastrianism*, 1913, ch. 6, p. 296, quoted in J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *The Western Response to Zoroaster*, pp. 87-88. •

³ Paul J. du Breuil, "Zoroastrian Influence on Judaism, Hellenism and the Origins of Christianity," *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute*, No. 48 (Bombay 1980), pp. 36-37. According to du Breuil "The first establishment of the Hebrews in Media and Elam dates, back to 722 B.C. under Sargon, King of Assyria. Thus, until the end of the late Sasanian empire in 642 A.C. the Hebraic stay in Iran lasted more than 13 centuries!"

⁴ Isaiah 45:1, *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments: Translated out of the Original Tongues and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised: King James Version, 1611. A Reference Edition with Concordance* (New York; Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles: American Bible Society, n.d.), p. 640.

"Thus saith the *Lord* to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him . . . I will go before thee, and make the crooked paths straight

... that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call *Thee* by thy name, am the God of Israel."

Unless otherwise stated, all following references to The Bible are from this edition, and line numbers follow the quoted passage in the text.

⁵ Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism: Volume II: Under the Achaemenians* (Leiden/Koln: E.J. Brill, 1982), pp. 44-47.

⁶ Hinnells, "Zoroastrian Influence" *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute*, No. 45, pp. 1-18 and du Breuil, "Zoroastrian Influence" *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute*, No. 48, pp. 31-42.

⁷ Duchesne-Guillemin, *Western Response*, pp. 88-89.

⁸ Lawrence Mills, *Our Own Religion in Ancient Persia: Being Lectures Delivered in Oxford Presenting the Zend Avesta as Collated with the Pre-Christian Exilic Pharisaism, Advancing the Persian Question to the Foremost Position in our Biblical Research* (F.A. Brockhaus, Leipzig: Pub in the US: Open Court Publishing Company, 1913), p. 13.

See also Lawrence Mills, *Avesta Eschatology: Compared with the Books of Daniel and Revelation* (Chicago: Open Court Pub. Co.; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1908), pp. 4-18. Mills feels that the Seven Spirits of the Avesta are seen in Job, Zechariah, Tobit and the Apocalypse. In Job, though the number Seven is lacking the mention of "Walking to and fro in the Earth," is typically Zoroastrian. In Tobit xxi-15, the Zoroastrian ideas are clear and we even have a mention of one of the Gathic demons (iii.8.17, vii.3). The entire story of the Book of Tobit centres at Ragha, a city so

Zoroastrian that the very name Zarathushtra became a high civic title. Zechariah IV.10 also speaks of "The Seven Spirits which are as the Eyes of the Lord, and which run to and fro throughout the whole earth," recalling the activities of the Amesha Spentas. The phrase "Eyes of the Lord," is reminiscent of the Sun being "The eye of Ahura."

⁹ Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, *Religion of Ancient Iran*, trans. K.M. Jamasp Asa (1962; rpt. Bombay: Tata Press, 1973), p. 19.

¹⁰ St. Augustine, quoted in Désirée Hirst, *Hidden Riches*, p. 25.

¹¹ Dastur Framroze Ardeshir Bode and Piloo Navavutty, ed., *Songs of Zarathustra: The Gathas*, trans. from *The Avesta* (London: George Allen Unwin, 1952), pp. 36-38.

¹² Isidore Epstein, *Judaism: A Historical Presentation*, (1959 rpt., Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p. 228. Epstein regards the *Sefer Yetzirah* as the oldest speculative work in Hebrew; a fusion of mysticism and philosophy which is typical of the Kabbalah. The problems of cosmology and cosmogony form the main part of this work. The paths to God are explained as the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet together with the ten *Sefirot*, or spirits of air, water, fire, the Four Cardinal points of the compass, height and depth; which along with the Spirit of God, are eternal. They are the non-material entities constituting the forms of all creation and they unite with the letters of the alphabet, the prime cause of matter, to give rise to the world of corporeal beings. (See pp. 226-28)

¹³ Volney's influence on the English radicals was discussed by Professor Marilyn Butler in her talk. For his reading of Zoroastrianism see Duchesne-Guillemin, *Western Response*, p. 87.

¹⁴ Basnage, *The History of the Jews from Jesus Christ to the Present Time, Containing Their Antiquities, Their Religion, Their Rites, The dispersion of the Ten Tribes in the East and the Persecution this Nation has Suffered in the West. Being a Supplement and Continuation of the History of Josephus.* Written in French by Mr. Basnage, trans into English by Tho. Taylor, A.M. London, 1708, pp. viii-ix.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Book IV, pp. 280 & 387.

¹⁶ John Lawrence Mosheim, *An Ecclesiastical History Antient and Modern from the Birth of Christ to the Beginning of the Present Century in which the Rise Progress and Variations of Church Power are Considered In Their Connexion with the State of Learning and Philosophy and the Political History of Europe during That Period*, trans. with notes by Archibald Maclaine in 2 volumes (London: Printed for A Millar, Strand, MDCCLXV), Vol. I, p. 37.

¹⁷ *The Whole Genuine and Complete Works of Flavius Josephus the Learned and Authentic Jewish Historian and Celebrated Warrior, trans from The Original in the Greek language, to which is added various useful Indexes. Also a continuation of the History of the Jews*, George Henry Maynard. Illustrated by Rev. Edward Kimpton & engraved. (London: C. Cook, 1800).

¹⁸ Herodotus, quoted in W. Sherwood Fox and R.E.K. Pemberton, trans. *Passages in Greek and Latin Literature Relating to Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism*, K.R. Cama Oriental Institute Publication, No. 4 (Bombay: Taraporevala and Sons & co., 1927-28), p. 5.

This collection starting even before Herodotus with Xanthus and including hundreds of references to Zoroastrianism and the Persians, shows the widespread

knowledge regarding the topic that existed in the Western classics.

¹⁹ Martin Haug, *Essays on the Sacred Language, Writings, and Religion of the Parsis*, ed. & enlarged E.W. West (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., n.d.), 3rd edn. Preface dtd. 1883, pp. 5-8.

²⁰ Paul J. du Breuil, "Zoroastrian Influence" *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute*, No. 48, pp. 32-34. In an *Anonymous Life of Plato* ed. Westermann Paris 1862, p. 7, it is stated that Plato when in Phoenicia "fell in with some Persians and among them learned the doctrine of Zoroaster." See Sherwood Fox and REK Pemberton, *Passages*, p. 22.

²¹ Pliny the Elder, in Sherwood Fox and Pemberton, *Passages*, p. 44.

²² Plutarch, quoted in Sherwood Fox & Pemberton, *Passages*, pp. 51-53. The twenty-four "other gods" seem to be a reference to the thirty spirits who preside over particular days of the month. These consist of the six higher divinities, and the twenty four lower divinities, apart from Ahura Mazda.

²³ Jacob Bryant, *A New System or an Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, Vol. I, Plate I, p. 215, Vol. II, p. 118. Dio Chrysostem quotes the legend:

Zoroaster . . . through zeal for wisdom withdrew from the rest of men to live by himself in a certain mountain; a great fire then fell down from heaven, and set the mountain on fire so that it burnt continuously. Accordingly the King, accompanied by the most notable of the Persians drew near to it prompted by a desire to pray to the Gods. The man came out of the fire unscathed and appeared before them and graciously bade them be of good cheer . . . since the God had come to that place.

See Sherwood Fox and Pemberton, p. 48.

²⁴ Sherwood Fox and Pemberton, pp. 34-38, 47-51, 107, 125. Photius quotes Theodorus of Mopsuestia's "Concerning Magic in Persia."

²⁵ Blake had access to Prodicus's writings on Zoroaster in Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique (Historical and Critical Encyclopaedia)* 3rd edition revised and enlarged by the author. (Rotterdam: Michael Bohm, MDCCXX), pp. 2925-2930

²⁶ A.V. Williams Jackson, *Zoroaster: The Prophet of Ancient Iran* (New York & London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1899), p. 8.

²⁷ *Select Works of Plotinus the Great Restorer of The Philosophy of Plato: Extracts from the Treatise of Synesius on Providence*, trans. from the Greek by Thomas Taylor with an Introduction containing the substance of Porphyry's Life of Plotinus (London, 1817), printed and sold by the Author, No. 9, Manor Place, Walworth, Black and Son Tavistock Strt, Covent Garden. Also F. London: Printed by A.J. Valpy Tooke's Court, Chancery Lane, 1817.

²⁸ Kathleen Raine, & George Mills Harper, ed., *Thomas Taylor the Platonist: Selected Writings*, Bollingen Series LXXVIII (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 41-44.

Also see Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, Vol. I, pp. 75-83.

²⁹ Thomas Taylor, trans., *Select Works of Porphyry, containing His Four Books on Abstinence from Animal Food, His Treatise on the Homeric Cave of the Nymphs and his Auxiliaries to the Perceptions of Intelligible Nature* trans from the Greek, with an

Appendix explaining the Allegory of the Wanderings of Ulysses, by the translator, (London: For Thomas Rodd, 1823), p. 175.

³⁰ Raine & Harper ed., *Thomas Taylor: Selected Writings*, p. 319.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

³² George Mills Harper, *The Neoplatonism of William Blake* (Chapel Hill: The Univ. of North Carolina Press, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 54-55. Some of the Dialogues had been translated earlier by Sydenham. Taylor had also published some; *Phaedrus* (1792), *Cratylus*, *Phaedo*, *Parmenides*, & *Timaeus* (1793) but from 1602-1804 only one complete *Works* of Plato appeared in a modern language, in an Italian edition, therefore when Blake engraved "See Plato's Works" on *The Laocoön* group he must probably have meant Taylor's 1804 translation.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 87, quoting Proclus.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

³⁵ Kenneth Rexroth, Introduction "A Primer of Gnosticism" in G.R.S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: The Gnostics: A Contribution to The Study of the Origins of Christianity*, p. vii.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. xii-xix.

³⁷ Harnack, quoted in G.R.S. Mead, p. 136.

³⁸ Mead, p. 177. Also see Bode and Nanavutty, *The Gathas, Introduction*, p. 36.

³⁹ Mead, pp. 171-72, quoting Hippolytus.

⁴⁰ Mead, p.p. 279 and 94.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

⁴² I.J.S. Taraporewala, *The Religion of Zarathustra*, pp. 335-36.

⁴³ Dhalla, *History of Zoroastrianism*, p. 302.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 305-08.

⁴⁵ Taraporewala, p. 348.

⁴⁶ Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*, (1958 rev. 2nd ed, Beacon Hill, Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 206.

⁴⁷ Robinson's Small Diary Entry for December 17th. Footnote from G.E. Bentley Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 316.

⁴⁸ Corbin, Henry, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, 1971, ed. trans. from the French by Nancy Pearson (Boulder & London: Shambala, 1978), pp. 21-22.

⁴⁹ John Joseph Stoudt, *Sunrise to Eternity: A Study in Jacob Boehme's Life and Thought*, Preface Paul Tillich (Philadelphia: Univ of Pennsylvania Press; Bombay: OUP, 1957), p. 95.

Among those who explained the mysteries to Boehme were friend and physician Tobias Kober, Johann Rothe, Michael Kurtz, Burgomaster Scultetus and Dr. Balthaser Walther, Director of the Chemical Laboratory at Dresden--all of them men well acquainted with various forms of scholarship.

⁵⁰ G.E. Bentley and Martin K. Nurmi, *A Blake Bibliography: Annotated Lists of Works, Studies and Blakeana* (Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota Press, 1946), List of Books owned by Blake. It records that Blake owned *The Works of Jacob Behmen*, trans. Sparrow, Ellistone, H. Hlunden with minor alterations, ed. G. Ward and T. Langahe, Vol. I, II, III, IV, with figures of William Law. He also owned the Law set.

⁵¹ *The Works of Jacob Behmen: The Teutonic Theosopher Vol. I Containing I. The Aurora II The Three Principles* to which is prefixed *The Life of The Author* with Figures, illustrating his *Principles* left by *The Reverend William Law, M.A.* London: Printed for M. Richardson in Pater-Noster Row, MDCCLXIV, pp. vii-viii.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁵⁴ Law's translation of *Works*, p. 97 & 91.

⁵⁵ *The Works of Jacob Behmen: The Teutonic Theosopher Vol. II: Containing I The Threefold Life of Man, II The Answers to Forty Questions Concerning the Soul, III The Treatise of The Incarnation: in Three Parts, IV The Clavis: or an Explanation of some Principal Points and Expressions in his writings with Figures illustrating his Principles*, left by the Rev. William Law M.A. (London: Printed for M. Richardson in Pater-Noster Row MDCCLXIV), p. 113.

⁵⁶ *The Works of Jacob Behmen: The Teutonic Theosopher Vol. III containing: i) The Mystorium Magnum or an explanation of the 1st Book of Moses, called Genesis: In Three Parts II), Four Tables of Divine Revelation with Figures, illustrating his*

Principles, left by the Rev. William Law, M.A. London: Printed for G. Robinson in Pater Noster Row MDCCLXXII, p. 34.

While exploring the links between Boehme and the Zoroastrian tradition, Professor Peter Malekin, Univ. of Durham was consulted. In a letter he says the mountainless earth prophecy seems on the face of it clearer evidence of a connection between Boehme and Zoroastrianism than the discussions of fire and light which Boehme himself claimed to have derived primarily from direct cognition. Prof Malekin goes on to say "What is original in Boehme and may relate more closely to Zoroastrianism is the notion of darkness and light as principles within the life of God, the basis of God's own manifestation . . . what Boehme in fact says is that God is beyond good and evil, though he is the source of good to man. On the question of the manifestation of evil in the world, he hedges, in earlier works saying that God knew and intended it after the fire principle, in later works saying that it was never intended to be manifest, but became so because erring creatures and originally Satan, have separated the fire principle from the light it was supposed to uphold by plunging into their own separate egos rather than resting in the universal will of God."

⁵⁷ *The Aurora, Works* Volume I, ed. Law, p. 10.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁵⁹ *Works*, ed. Law, Volume II, Preface.

⁶⁰ *The Three Principles, Works*, Vol. I, p. 3.

⁶¹ *Aurora, Works*, Vol. I, p. 144.

⁶² Emanuel Swedenborg, *True Christian Religion: Containing the Universal*

Theology of the New Church: which was Foretold by The Lord in Daniel Ch. VII, 5.13.14. and in The Apocalypse Ch. XXI. 1.2. Now first trans. from the original Latin Vol. I and II (London: J. Phillips and J. Denis and Son, MDCCLXXXI), pp. 327-335.

⁶³ Emanuel Swedenborg, *A Treatise Concerning Heaven and Hell* trans. from the Latin, 2nd edn (London: R. Hindmarsh, MDCCLXXXIV), pp. 49-55.

⁶⁴ G.E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records*, pp. 34-35.

⁶⁵ Denis Saurat, *Blake and Modern Thought* (London: Constable & Co., 1929), p. 59.

⁶⁶ Désirée Hirst, p. 270.

⁶⁷ Serge Hutin, *Les Disciples Anglais De Jacob Boehme: aux XVII^e et XVIII^e Siècles* (Paris: editions Denoel, 1960). All quotations in English follow the unpublished, authorized English translation by Dr. Sarvar Khambatta, St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad.

⁶⁸ Hutin, pp. 47-81. Chapter VI in Hutin's book refers to Isaac Newton. Newton's Theory of Universal gravitation is seen in the light of ideas of attraction and repulsion found in Boehme. Newton's "hermetic" manuscripts, long dismissed as mythical have been proved to exist but access is extremely difficult since most are scattered in private collections. This is mere speculation, but a study of these might perhaps reveal that through Boehme and other alchemists the ancient Persian doctrine of the contraries had even permeated down to one of the greatest scientific theories of the western world.

⁶⁹ Hutin, p. 157. The term "spiritual materiality" is taken from Law's translation

of Boehme's *Works* cf. *Spirit of Prayer*, Hutin FN 45, p. 298.

⁷⁰ Hutin, p. 158, quoting *Law Works*, Vol. VI, Hutin FN 55, p. 299.

⁷¹ Jean H. Hagstrum, "Blake and the Sister-Arts Tradition" in David V. Erdman and John E. Grant, ed., *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), p. 91.

⁷² W.J.T. Mitchell, "Blake's Composite Art" in Erdman and Grant, ed., *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, pp. 59-61. This article carries further Hagstrum's discussion on Blake's methods of uniting the sister arts. The theory behind the tradition of "ut pictura poesis" was that the arts should combine forces to lead man beyond himself and upto the Divinity.

⁷³ Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, *Blake's Human Form Divine* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: Univ. of California Press, 1974), p. xvi Introduction.

⁷⁴ Anthony Blunt, "Blake's Pictorial Imagination" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* VI, 1943, pp. 190-212. The Plate references are as follows:

Plate 2 Bryant, *New System or an Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, vol. I, p. 224, Pl V.

Plate 3 Bryant, Vol. II, Plate XV.

Plate 4 Bryant, Vol. I, p. 410, Pl. VI.

Plate 5 Bryant, Vol. I, p. 232, Pl. III.

Plate 6 See M. Cornelius Le Bruyn, *Travels into Muscovy Persia and East India: Containing An Accurate Description of whatever is most remarkable in*

those countries and embellished with over 320 copper Plates, 2 vols.
trans. from the original French (London: Printed for A. Bettesworth & C.
Hitch, S: Brit, C. Davis, J. Clarke, S. Harding, Browne, A. Millar, J.
Shuckburgh & T. Osborne MDCCXXXVII) Vol. II, Plate 151-152.

Plate 7 Le Bruyn, Vol. II, Pl. 153.

Plate 8 Le Bruyn, Vol. II, Pl. 167, 170, 171.

Plate 9 Le Bruyn, Vol. II, Pl. 166, 168, 169.

⁷⁵ Geoffrey Keynes, *Blake Studies: Notes on his Life and Works*, pp. 43-49. The plate references are as follows:

For the Bull's motif See Plates 10-13.

Plate 10 Le Bruyn Vol. II, Pl. 124-125. The Man-headed Bulls have their faces obliterated due to the ravages of time. For an idea of the face see next Plate.

Plate 11 Photographic reproduction of the Man-Lion, winged creature at Persepolis. See *Marg: A Magazine of the Arts* Vol. XXIV, Sept. 1971, No. 4, p. 44.

Plate 12 *Jerusalem* Pl. 41 [46] D. Erdman, *Illuminated Blake* p. 320.

Plate 13 Le Bruyn Vol. II Plate 162, 163, 164, 165.

For the frieze see Plates 14-19.

Plate 14 Bryant's *Mythology* Vol. II, Plate II.

Plate 15 Keynes's reproduction in Geoffrey Keynes's *Blake Studies* Plate 12.

- Plate 16** Keynes *Blake Studies* Plate 18. Plate from *Night Thoughts*.
- Plate 17** Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition II*, p. 22. "David delivered out of many waters" Water colour.
- Plate 18** Keynes *Blake Studies* pl. 35. "When the Morning Stars Sang together" early proof of the engraving from the collection of Geoffrey Keynes.
- Plate 19** Keynes, *Blake Studies*, pl. 27. "When the Morning Stars Sang together" Water colour drawing from the set done for Thomas Butts. In the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

⁷⁶ Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake*, ed. Ruthven Todd (London & New York: Everyman's Library, J.M. Dent, and E.P. Dutton, 1945), p. 12. First ed. 1863 (A), 2nd ed. 1880 (B). The 1945 edition follows the (B) text and was first published in this form in 1942.

Gilchrist gives the date of Blake's apprenticeship as 1771. Keynes in *Blake Studies*, p. 41 gives us proof that the date of Blake's apprenticeship in the Apprentice Register at Stationers Hall was August 4, 1772.

⁷⁷ Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (1947; rpt. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), p. 171.

⁷⁸ The complete title runs thus: Jacob Bryant, *A new system or An Analysis of Ancient Mythology Wherein an Attempt is made to divest tradition of Fable and to reduce the Truth to its original Purity. In this work is given a History of the Babylonians, Chaldeans, Egyptians, Canaanites, Helladians, Ionians, Leleges, Dorians, Pelasgi. Also of the Sycthae Indosycthae, Ethiopians, Phenicians. The whole contains an Account of*

the Principal Events in the first Ages from the Deluge to the Dispersion. Also of the various migrations which ensued, and the settlements made afterwards in different parts. Circumstances of great Consequences, which were subsequent to the Gentile History of Moses.

⁷⁹ Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, p. 173.

Edward B. Hungerford, *Shores of Darkness* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1941), p. 20, says "He [Bryant] devoted a very long life to scholarship during the nine decades of which he came to not a single correct conclusion . . . at last, as if learning could no longer endure the outrage, a book fell on him . . . and he died from the injury."

Considering Bryant's contribution this remark is more cruelly amusing than apt.

⁸⁰ Bryant, *New System* Vol. II, Pl. 1 and Vol. I, Pl. II, p. 224.

⁸¹ Mary Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. II, pp. 110-15.

⁸² Bryant Vol. I, 215, 224, 323, 294, 488, Vol. II, pp. 108-125, Vol. III, pp. 588-601.

⁸³ Barnabé Brisson, *De Regio Persarum Principatu Libri Tres*. Ex. a duersarjuss V.C.B.B.S.P.P. Paris: iss Vaenent Exempla apud Robertum Cotubellum in monte D. Hilariji in Aldine Bibliotheca MDLXXXI.

⁸⁴ Henry Lord, *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects in The East India viz The Sects of the Banians, The Ancient Natives of India and The Sect of the Persees, The Ancient Inhabitants of Persia together with the Religion and Manors of each Sect*. Collected into two books by Henry Lord. Sometime resident in East Indies and Preacher to the Ho'ble

Company of Merchants trading therein. Imprinted at London in Francis Constable and are to be sold at his shoppe in Paules Church-yard at the signe of the Crane 1630. W.R. Will Marshall Sculpt. Printed by T & R Cotes.

⁸⁵ Lord, pp. 16-27.

⁸⁶ Hyde, *Veterum Persarum*

Two editions have been consulted, the first and the second. The first edition is: *Historia Religionis Veterum Persarum Eorumque Magorum ubi etiam nova Abrahami & Mithrae & vestae & manetis & C. Historia, atque Angelorum officia & Praefecturae ex Veterum Persarum Sententia.* Item, Persarum annus Antiquissimus tangitur. Autor est Thomas Hyde STD Ling. Hebraicae in Universitate Oxon, Oxoni, MDCC. Julii illustrissimo et Honoratissimo. Sommers, Baron de Evesham, Hunc. Libellum, Humillime DDCQ. Autor. The 2nd ed. is of 1760. Plates are as follows

- Plate 22* Hyde, Tab VI, p. 307.
- Plate 23* Hyde, Tab XIII, p. 415.
- Plate 24* Hyde, Tab VIII, p. 359.
- Plate 25* Hyde, Tab IV, p. 143.
- Plate 26* Hyde, Tab XIV, p. 547.

⁸⁷ Anquetil du Perron, *Ouvrage de Zoroastre contenant les idees, Theologiques, Physiques, and Morales de ce Legislatuers, la ceremonies du culte Religieus qui'l a etabli and plusieurs traits importants relatifs a l' ancienne Historie des Perses.* Traduit en Francois sur l' original Zend. Par. M. Anquetil du Perron. Paris: NM Tilliard MDCCLXXI, Librarie Quai des Angustins à s. Benoit. vol. I, 1st Part vj. unpublished

Translation by Dr. Sarvar Khambatta. St. Xaviers College, Ahmedabad.

⁸⁸ Raymond Schwab, quoted by Said *Orientalism*, p. 76.

⁸⁹ Sir William Jones, *The Works in VI volumes*. London Printed for G.G. & J. Robinson, Paternoster Row and R.H. Evans (successor to Mr. Edwards, No. 26 Pall-Mall), MDCCXCIX.

Volume II contains p. 119 "Grammar of the Persian Language with a History of the Persian Language." While Vol. IV, p. 583, the letter to Anquetil du Perron, which started off their quarrel.

Another edition is William Jones, *A Grammer of the Persian Language* (London: Printed by W. Bulmer & Co. 1809), 7th edition.

The list of Plate is as follows:

Plate 27 Perron, *Zend Avesta* Vol. II, p. 4, Plate 14.

Plate 28 Perron, Vol. II, p. 531-533, Pl. X.

Plate 29 Perron, Vol. II, p. 531-533, Pl. XI.

Plate 30 Perron, Pl. XIII.

Plate 31 Perron, Vol. II, p. 341, Pl. VII.

Plate 32 Perron, Vol. II, p. 424, Pl. VIII.

⁹⁰ *Amoenitatum Exoticarum: Politico-Physico-Medicarum Fasciculi V. Quibus continentur Variae Relationes, observationes, and Descriptiones. Reruum Persicarum and Uterioris Asiae multa attentione, in peregrinationibus per Universumns orientem.*

Collectae ab. Auctore Engelberto Kaempfer. D. Lemgoriae: 1712. Illustrissimo Cel. Sissimoque, Comiti ac Domino Friderico Adolpho. Despite all efforts these plates were unavailable for reproduction in this thesis.

M. Cornelius Le Bruyn, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia and East Indies; Containing An Accurate Description of Whatever is most remarkable in those countries: and embellished with above 320 Copper Plates etc.* 2 vols. See. p. 41. Plates 33-38 are as follows:

- Plate 33* Cornelius Le Bruyn vol. II, Part of Plate, Long and folded over a number of times.
- Plate 34* Le Bryun, Vol. II, Pl. 143, 144.
- Plate 35* Le Bruyn, Vol. II, Pg. 23 of Text with Plate.
- Plate 36* Le Bruyn, Vol. II, Pl. 145, 146.
- Plate 37* Le Bruyn, Vol. II, Part of large plate, p. 158.
- Plate 38* Le Bruyn, Vol. II, Pl. 129, 130.

⁹¹ Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin En Perse* par L. Langles, Paris: Le Normant Imprimerie Librarie, 1811, Published in 4 volumes in 1735.

Also, *The Travels of Sir John Chardin Into Persia and the East Indies. Through the Black Sea and the Country of Colchis. Containing the Author's voyage from Persis to Ispahan. Illustrated with 25 copper plates. To which is added the Coronation of this present King of Persia Solyman III.* London: Christopher Bateman: The Bible and Crown, 1691.

For a modern edition see *Sir John Chardin's Travels in Persia* with an Introduction by Brig.-General Sir Percy Sykes, London: The Argonaut Press, 1927. trans. for the thesis by Dr. Sarvar Khambatta.

The Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant: in Three Parts viz. 1. Turkey, 2. Persia, 3. the East Indies, newly done out of French. Licensed Dec 2, 1686. R. O'L Estrange. (London: H. Clark, for H Faithhorne J. Adamson, C. Skeynes & T. Newborough. MDCLXXXVII).

⁹² Friar Jordanus, *The Wonders of the East* (1330) trans. from the Latin original, as published at Paris in 1839 in the *Recueil de Voyages et de Memoires*, of the Society of Geography by Col. Henry Yule. (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society. MDCCCLXIII.) See p. 21 FN. Various editions were published, this one dates after Blake's death, others were available in his lifetime.

Collections of *Travels Through Turkey, into Persia and The East Indies: Giving an Account of the Present State of those Countries etc. Being the Travels of Monsieur Tavernier, Bernier and other great Men, adorned with many copper plates.* 1st vol. (London: Moses Pitt, MDCLXXXIV) pp. 165-66.

Sir Andrew Ramsay, *A New Cyropaedia or the Travels of Cyrus with a Discourse on the Theology and Mythology of the Ancients.* New edition with emendations and additions. (Edinburgh: Printed for the Company of Booksellers, 1730). See p. 55.

The History of Herodotus trans. from the Greek with notes by the Rev. William Beloe 4 vols. (London: Leigh & Sotheby, MDCCXCI).

Interesting Historical Events Relative to the Provinces of Bengal and the Empire

of Indostan. J.Z. Holwell Part I 2nd edition London: MDCCLXVI, p. 25.

Travels of the Jesuits into Various Parts of the World: Compiled from their letters. 1st attempted in English: intermix'd with an Account of the Manners, government, Religion and C. of the Several nations visited by those Fathers. With extracts from other Travellers and misc. Notes, ed. Mr. Lockman. Illustrated with Maps and Sculptures 2 vols. (London: MDCCXLIII. Printed for John Noon, White Hart near Mercer's Chapel Cheapside) .

A Voyage to the East Indies and China Performed by order of Lewis XV Between the Years 1774-1781. Trans. from the French of Mon. Sonnerat by Francis Magnus Vol. I (Calcutta. From the Press of Stuart & Cooper MDCCLXXXVIII) .

Voyage to the East Indies late John Splinter Stavorinus. trans from the original Dutch by Samuel Hull Willcocke with notes and additions. Illustrated with Maps 3 vols. (London: GG & J. Robinson, 1798). See Vol. II, p. 504-510, Vol. III, p. 2.

J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Suratt in the Year 1689* (London: 1696), pp. 373-74 & 376.

The History of Hindostan Sanscreeet and Classical from the Birth of Brahma: Sec I. Indian Antiquities and Dissertations. 7 volumes, Thomas Maurice, (London: 1793-1800). See Vol. I, ii, xcii, Vol. II, pp. 196-97, 229-31, 310, Vol. IV, Title page, Vol. V, pp. 814-16. Vol. VI, p. 76.

Also see Thomas Maurice, *Observations Connected with the Astronomy and Ancient History: Sacred & Profane, on the Ruins of Babylon with Illustrations & engravings.* (London: John Murray 1816) .

Thomas Maurice, *A Dissertation on the Oriental Trinities*: Extracted from the Fourth and Fifth volumes of *Indian Antiquities*, illustrated with engravings (London: 1801).

A Collection of Voyages and Travels. Some now printed from Original Manuscripts: others translated out of foreign languages & now first published in English To which are added some Few that have formerly appeared in English, but do now for their Excellency and Scarceness deserve to be reprinted. In 4 vols. (London: Printed for Awnsham & John Churchill, Black Swan in Paternoster Row, MDCCIV).

⁹³ John Henry Grose, *A Voyage to the East Indies with Observations on Various Parts There* (London: For S. Hooper and A. Morley, Strand, MDCCLVII), p. 357.

⁹⁴ John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia in Eight Letters Being Nine Years Travels Begun 1672 Finished 1681*. Illustrated with maps, figures and useful tables (London: printed by R.R. at Rose & Crown in St. Pauls Churchyard MDCXCVIII).

W Ouseley, ed., *The Oriental Collections: Consisting of Original Essays and Dissertations, translations and Miscellaneous Papers, illustrating the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia*. 3 vols, 1797-1799.

See Vol. II, p. 43.

John Ogilby, *Asia* (London: MDCLXXIII).

James Morier, *A Journey Through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor to Constantinople in the years 1808-1809 with 25 engravings* (London: Longmans, 1812).

The Voyages and Travels of J. Albert de Mandelslo, A Gentleman belonging to

the Embassy, sent by the Duke of Holstein to the Great Duke of Muscovy and the King of Persian into the East Indies. Begun MDCXXXVIII and finish'd MDCXL. In 3 books rendered into English by John Davies 2nd ed. (London: T. Starkey & T. Basset, 1669).

Voyage en Perse Pendant les annees 1812 & 1813 Gaspard Drouville. 2 vols et un Atlas St. Petersbourg Imprime chez Pluchart a ses frais, 1819.

Translated for purpose of this thesis by Dr. Sarvar Khambatta.

Relations Nouvelles du Levant ou Traites de la Religion du Gouvernement & des Coutumes des perses, des Armeniens and des Gaures. Compuze's par le PGDC (Le Perc. Gabriel de Chinon) par le Sieur L.M.P.D.E.T. A. Lyon, che's lean Thilly rue Merciere a la Palme MDCLXXI. Translated into English for this thesis by Dr. Sarvar Khambatta.

John Pinkerton, ed., *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in all Parts of the World; Many of which are now 1st translated into English. Illustrated with Plates 17 vols.* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Cadell & Davies, 1808)

On Asia Vols. 8, 9, 10, 11, dated 1811. See vol. 8, p. 320.

⁹⁵ Sir Robert Ker Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, Ancient Babylonia, &C & C, 1817, 1818, 1819, 1820. With numerous Engravings of Portraits Costumes, Antiquities and C.* 2 vols. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown 1821-1822). See vol I, p. 516. Despite all efforts these plates were unavailable for reproduction.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 656, plate 48.

The quotation is purportedly from *The Desatir - Book of Zardusht*. According to Professor Mary Boyce, it is a collection of a later date, brought from Iran to India, more a Sufi work, spurious from the orthodox Zoroastrian angle. It was published in 1820 by Mulla Firoze. Nevertheless it here serves its purpose of explaining one of the symbols of Zoroastrianism.

⁹⁷ Nora K. Firby, *European Travellers and Their Perceptions of Zoroastrians in The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the Degree of M. Phil. in the Faculty of Theology, Department of Comparative Religion, Sept. 1984.

References are to the unpublished ms. It is believed to have been published at a later date. See her *Introduction*, p. v.

⁹⁸ Abbé Banier, *The Mythology and Fables of the Ancients explain'd from History*. Trans. from the original French. (London: for A. Millar at Buckanan's Head against St. Clement's Church in the Strand MDCCXXXIX - MDCCXL). Vol. I, Ch. I, Bk. I, p. 12.

⁹⁹ Banier, Vol. II, p. 98. See also Mary Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism* Vol. I, p. 167. Professor Boyce explains the origins of the bundle of "tamarin" in the hands of the priest. It is traced to the grass or "barsom" used as sacrificial offerings. The priests used to pick up some and hold these to share in their purifying and protective powers. Symbolically they were acknowledging that all flesh is grass and priest and victim both will pass away. Later a small bundle of twigs or rods came to be used for the same symbolic purpose. *Plate 39* Plate from Hyde Tab IX, p. 375.

¹⁰⁰ Bernard Picart, *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Idolatrous*

Nations Together with Historical Annotations and Several Curious Discourses Equally Instructive and Entertaining. Written in French and illustrated with Copper plates all beautifully designed. Engraved by most of the Best hands in Europe. Trans. into English by a gentleman. (London: Printed by William Jackson for Claude Du Bosc, MDCCXXXIII).

¹⁰¹ Charles Butler, *Horae Biblicae: 1 & 2*, 1797-1802.

Horae Biblicae Part the Second: Being a Connected Series of Miscellaneous Notes on the Koran, The Zend- Avesta, the Vedas, the Kings and the Edda, 1802, See, p 105

¹⁰² Plate 40: Stukeley's plate as taken from Bryant Vol. 1, p. 488. Joseph Priestley, *A Comparison of the Institutions of Moses with Those of the Hindoos and Other Ancient Nations*, etc. (Northumberland: Printed for author by A. Kennedy, MDCCXCIX).

Humphrey Prideaux, *The Old and New Testaments connected in the History of the Jews, and neighbouring nations from the Declensions of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah to the Time of Christ*. 16th edition, to which is added the *Life of the Author* 4 vols. (London: W. Baynes, 1808). See p. 263.

Basnage, *History of the Jews*,

R.P. Knight, *An Inquiry into The Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology* (London: Printed by A.J. Valpy, 1818 [In a collection called *Tracts*.]) .

Davies, Edward, *Celtic Researches on the Origin Traditions and Language of the Ancient Britons with some Introductory Sketches on Primitive Society* (London: Printed for the author & sold J. Booth, 1804) pp. 120-21.

William Stukeley, *Abury: A Temple of the British Druids: with some others described: wherein a more Particular account of the first and patriarchal religion, and of the peopling The British Islands.* (London: Printed for author. Sold W. Innys, R. Manby, B. Dod, J. Brindley, London: MDCCXLIII). See Vol. II, p. 78 TAB, XL.

Bishop Burnett, *The Sacred Theory of the Earth in which are set forth the Wisdom of God displayed in the works of the creation, Salvation and Consummation of all Things. Until the Destruction of the World by Fire: Including the Blessed Millennium or the reign of Christ with his Saints upon Earth. Together with copious Notes on the wonders of nature selected from the Writings of the Most learned Divines.* (London: T. Kinnersley, Acton Place, Kingsland Road, 1816) .

Q. Craufurd, *Researches Concerning the Laws, Theology Commerce etc.* of Ancient and Modern India.* 2 vols.(London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1817) .

James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs; Selected and Abridged from a Series of Familiar Letters written during Seventeen years residence in India.* Illustrated by engravings from original Drawings. 4 vols.(London, 1813) .

Ogilvie, John, *The Theology of Plato compared with the Principles of Oriental and Grecian Philosophers*(London. MDCCXCIII) .

Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique.* Troisieme edition Revue corrigee et Augumtee par l'Auteur(Rotterdam: Michael Bohm MDCCXX) .

The Ancient History of Asia and Remarks on the Atlantis of Plato to which are Added observations on the Learning of the Ancient Brahmans; in a series of Letters addressed to M. Du Voltaire. By M. Bailly. 2 vols.(London: J. Coxhead, 1814.) .

103 Edwin John Ellis and William Butler Yeats, ed., *The Works of William Blake: Poetic, Symbolic and Critical*, ed., with Lithographs of the Illustrated Prophetic Books and a Memoir and Interpretation, 3 vols (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893) p. 24, Vol. I.

104 George Stanley Faber, *A Dissertation on the Mysteries of the Cabiri, or the Great gods of Phoenicia, Samothrace, Egypt, Troas, Greece, Italy and Crete & C.* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1803) 2 vols. pp. 361-62.

105 Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, trans out of Latin and into the English Tongue by J.F. (London: R.W. for Gregory Monk, 1651) .

Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *His Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy of Germany, Magical Elements of Peter de Abamo, Astronomical Geomancy, The Nature of Spirits, Arbatel of Magic*. Trans. into English by Robert Turner (London: Printed for J.C. for John Harrison at the Lamb at the East End of Pauls, 1655) (Microfilm at the British Library, London, Book 1, Ch. I, p. 9).

106 Robert Fludd, *Mosaicall Philosophy: Grounded upon the Essential Truth and Eternal Sapience*. Written first in Latin and afterwards rendered into English. (London: Humphrey Moseley, Princes Armes in St. Pauls Churchyard, 1659) .

Francis Barrett, *The Magus or Celestial Intelligencer Being a Complete System of Occult Philosophy in 3 Books. with Curious engravings, Magical and Cabalistical figures, etc* (London, 1801) .

The Works of Thomas Vaughan. Eugenius Philalethes, ed. annotated and introduced by Arthur Edward Waite. (London: Theosophical Pub. House, MCMXIX.) .

Paracelsus, *His Aurora and Treasure of the Philosopher as also the Water-Stone*

of the Wise Men Describing the matter of and manner how to attain the Universal Tincture. Faithfully Englished and published by J. H.(Oxon) London: Printed for Giles Calvert, 1659.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Stanley, *The History of the Chaldaick Philosophy* (London: Printed for Thomas Dring to be sold at his shop at the George in Fleet Street near Cliffords Inn, 1662). It also contains:

The Chaldaick Oracles of Zoroaster And His Followers with the Expositions of Pletho and Psellus (London: Printed by Thomas Dring, 1661), pp. 4-5.

Désirée Hirst in *Hidden Riches* (p. 22) dates Pletho's book on Zoroaster published in Paris at 1538. According to her Pletho had absorbed Zoroastrian doctrines from a teacher of Jewish origin, Elisseios, at Brusa, the Muslim centre of learning. The impetus for the establishment of the Medician Platonic Academy came from Georgius Gemistus who came to be known as Pletho, and who influenced Ficino in his *Corpus Hermeticum*. In a letter to Dr. Kathleen Raine, Désirée Hirst reveals that it was Pletho's breadth of knowledge which caused a great impression to be made at The General Council of 1439. This Council was moved to Florence by Pope Eugenius IV and here Pletho was given his title "Plethon" Greek for the "Full." Cardinal Bessarion was Pletho's pupil and according to Ficino it was the lectures Pletho gave in Florence that inspired Cosimo de Medici to found his Academy.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Stanley, *History of the Chaldaick Philosophy Part II. The Chaldaick Oracles.* The Oracles are in the Latin translation of Patricius, the commentaries of Pletho and Psellus are translated into English

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5, & pp. 37-47.

One such example of Pletho's exposition is on the soul. "The Magi . . . hold the human soul is immortal and descended from above to serve the mortal body, that is to operate therein for a certain time--to animate and adorn it to her power and then return to the place from which she came."

For a modern edition see W. Wynn Westcott, ed., *The Chaldean Oracles of Zoroaster: Mystical Utterances on the Nature of God and the Soul that preserve the Philosophical Origins of the Western Mystery Tradition* Intro. by Kathleen Raine. (1st pub. as Vol. VI of the *Collectanea Hermetica Series*, 1985). *Studies in Hermetic Tradition Series*. (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1983).

¹¹⁰ Abraham Rees, *The Cyclopaedia or Universal Dictionary of Arts, Science and Literature* Illustrated with numerous engravings by the most distinguished artists in 39 vols London: Longmans, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819-1820.

See Volumes of Plates I-IV.

Plate 41 Vol. IV of Plates entitled *Sculpture* plate IV, p. 147.

Plate 42 Close up of above.

Plate 43 Close up with Blake's signature.

¹¹¹ William Stukeley, *Ahury: A Temple of the British Druids, with some others Described: wherein is a more particular account of the first and patriarchal religion; & of the peopling of the British Islands*. Vol II, Printed for the author & sold by W. Innys, R. Manby, B. Dod, J. Brindley. MDCCXLIII, p. 78. See TAB. XL.

Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition* Vol. I, p. 50, and Ruthven Todd *Tracks in the Snow* pp. 48-52 both confirm that Blake certainly knew Stukeley's work. Both feel

his "Serpent-temples" (*Jerusalem* 4:80:48) influenced Plate 100 of *Jerusalem*. The use of this emblem will be seen in the light of Zoroastrian symbolism in Chapter VI.

¹¹² Picco della Mirandola, Commentary on Benivieni's *Cazona d' amore* quoted by Edgar Wind *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), p. 24.

¹¹³ Plate 43-44 Blake's Plates from Rees. (close-up).

Mary Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism* Vol. II p. 100. See also Boyce *Zoroastrians*, p. 58. & Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, "The Belief about the Future of the Soul Among the Ancient Egyptians and Iranians" in *Asiatic Papers: Papers Read Before the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1897, rpt. Bombay: Bombay Education Society Press, 1905.

J.M. Unvala, "The Winged Disk and the Winged Human Figure on Ancient Persian Monuments" in *Modi Memorial Volumes: Papers on Indo-Iranian and Other Subjects*. Written by Several Scholars in Honour of Dr. Jivanji Modi ed. by Modi Memorial Volume Board. Bombay. Fort Printing Press, 1930, pp. 488-99.

Duchesne-Guillemin, *Religion of Ancient Iran*, p. 117, is quite emphatic about the disk at Persepolis being a symbol of Ahura Mazda.

¹¹⁴ SBE, Vol 23, Part II, ed. Darmesteter, pp. 196 and 184.

¹¹⁵ Janet A Warner, "Blake's Use of Gesture" in Erdman and Grant, *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, p. 177.

¹¹⁶ Plate 45 Erdman, *Illuminated Blake* p. 312, Pl. 33 [37]D. See Anthony Blunt, *The Art of William Blake* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959), p. 41

117 Plates 46-47

Plate 46 *David Bindman & Deirdre Toomey, The Complete graphic works of William Blake: with 765 illustration.* (1978, rpt. Great Britain: Thames & Hudson 1986) *There is no natural religion* Pl. VII, pl. 26.

Plate 47 *Bindman & Toomey, All Religions are one*, Pl. 1 & 7, pl. 33 & 39.

118 SBE, Vol. 23, Farvandin Yasht, I. 19, p. 184.

119 Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism* II, p. 106.

120 Blunt, "Blake's Pictorial Imagination," *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institute* VI, p. 205. Ouseley's plates were unavailable, hence it has not been possible to explore this connection in greater detail. For the commonly used symbol of the Bull, see SBE, Vol. 5, Part I, p. 117, FN 6, trans. E.W. West, where Gopatshah is described "from foot to mid-body he is a bull, and from mid-body to top he is a man."

121 Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, Vol. I, p. 92.

122 Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, *Life and Myself Vol. I: Dawn Approaching Noon* Bombay: Nalanda Publication, 1948, pp. 154, 160-61. Chattopadhyaya the twentieth century Indian poet and revolutionary was a student who began a thesis at Cambridge entitled "William Blake and His Eastern Affinities." He describes a strange dream which occurred twice in the course of which William Blake appeared to him and told him "I first got into touch with the East through a painted bowl." Searching for this clue Chattopadhyaya found the proof which he has recounted. As the thesis was not completed, and all efforts to contact Mr. Chattopadhyaya failed, it is not possible to get any further information. Yet, if Blake could be led to the truth through vision, perhaps, he

could try and lead a researcher in the same way! Chattopadhyaya ends by saying that he came to the conclusion that Blake did have access to Eastern wisdom and "his mind, inherently mystical was made to travel far by his spasmodic contacts with India and Persia"(pp 160-161).

¹²³ David A. Pailin, *Attitudes to Other Religions: Comparative religion in Seventeenth and Eighteenth century Britain*. (Manchester and Dover, New Hampshire: Manchester Univ. Press, 1984)

For meticulous research into sources see also Mary Boyce, ed. & trans., *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*

¹²⁴ Pailin, p. 57

CHAPTER - III

Good and Evil: The Dualities

The Combats of Good & Evil . . . is Eating of The Tree of Knowledge.

The Combats of Truth & Error is Eating of the Tree of Life.

(Vision of The Last Judgment)

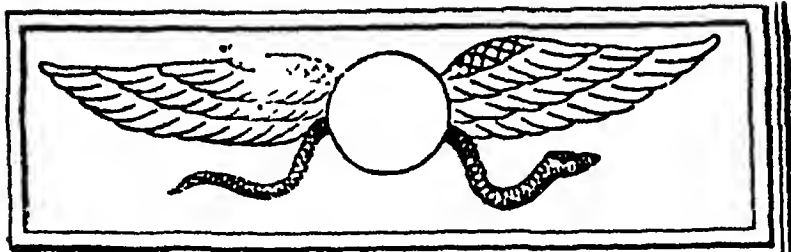
In Blake as well as in Zoroastrianism the two-fold structure of good and evil forms the very fabric of Creation. According to the dualistic theory the world is driven by the clash of contraries manifesting themselves as the tension between repulsion and attraction, opposition and reconciliation, thesis and antithesis all of which aims at a final state of synthesis where opposites are reconciled. As long as man is in this created world the polarities will exist for, "wherever anything is carried into effect in the actual world, there Dialectic is at work."¹ From the simple physical level of being, where light gives rise to its shadow or darkness, to the mental level where every individual contains within himself both a spectre and an Emanation, heaven and hell, a "fearful symmetry" exists where each one has to find a balance in order to work out his own destiny.

This doctrine of contraries forms the conceptual backdrop to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* whose satiric purpose lies in the semantic transformation of words such as 'good' and 'evil,' 'Heaven' and 'Hell.' This book can be seen as Blake's first attempt to present his philosophy to his audience though the intricate design and originality of his illuminated printing is very unlike the format of a normal philosophical text. On the surface nothing is less Zoroastrian than a marriage of contraries; Ahriman and Ohrmazd are polarities which are never meant to be reconciled, for as the Pahlavi texts specify:

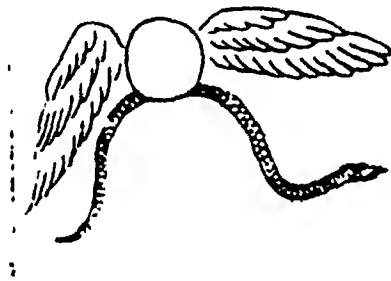
When good is There, the non-existence of evil is unquestionable; when light has come, darkness is removed. Even so of the other co-existences whose incompatibility and injuriousness together are owing to the cause of difference in nature.²

Blake is not attempting here to unite actual Good and Evil; as a poet his use of words varied with the growth of his ideas but despite the title the words 'Devil,' 'Hell,' 'Heaven' become examples of the semantic transformation mentioned earlier. Sometimes used conventionally by him, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake reverses their meanings. It is as if Blake, searching for an alternative to Christian morality had found a new system which exalted those very ideas and symbols that the Judaeo-Christian tradition decried. It was a system that celebrated life and taught that joy and pleasure, the gratification of desires was to be sought, not suppressed. Hence Blake's new theory became "Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy." "Energy is the only life, and is from the Body . . . Energy is Eternal Delight" (*MHH K*, 149). In a deliberate attempt to shock the orthodox Christian code the 'Devil' is glorified and Hell fires become "the enjoyments of Genius" (*K*, 150). Creative, energy-giving fires leap across the pages of the illustrations that accompany the text and the underlying emphasis is on making 'Satan,' endowed with fire and energy, more attractive than God who represents inescapable Destiny.

All this the poet has learnt in 'Hell,' a place of "Chambers" and "infinite caves" where there "were numbers of Eagle-like men who built palaces in the immense cliffs" (*K*, 154). The Western classical allusion to Homer's *Illiad* has been noted by Hagstrum. However, the plate also carries us back to the immense cliffs and carvings of Naqsh-i-Rustam, for the figure at the end of the plate is very reminiscent of part of Stukeley's "sacred heirogram" which Blake had seen in Bryant's *Mythology* (see plate - 48).³ Among the problems that Blake was dealing with in this early work was a concern with the duality in man. Christianity and Western philosophy both emphasized a natural world of the senses



From the Ruins of Naki Rustan



Pl. 48

Stukeley's "Sacred heirogram" and Blake's use of the symbol in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

opposed to the supernatural, divisions between the material and spiritual, a clash of body and soul, reason versus energy or instincts. But according to Blake the only way in which life should be lived was with a zest for all aspects of existence, including those which the orthodox might term sinful. The need to find a synthesis in which these disparate elements could be reconciled was Blake's primary concern in all his creative work. He would therefore "marry" these contraries in language very similar to Zoroastrian thought:

Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that call'd Body is a
portion of Soul discern'd by the five senses, the chief inlets of Soul in
this age.

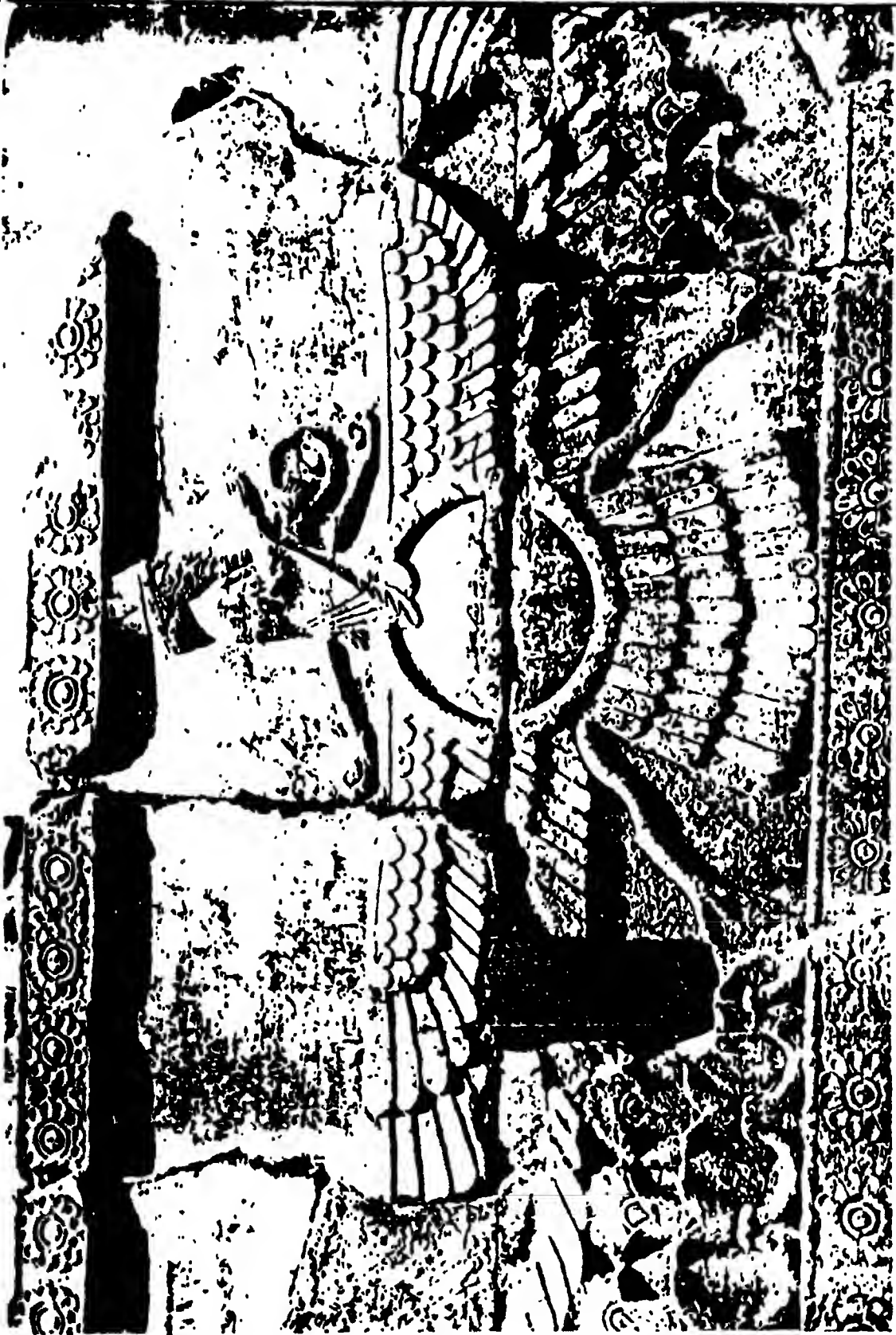
(MHH K, 149)

Occasionally, following the mystics, Blake declares the natural world to be false and unreal but there are many more instances in which the two, body and soul, join together. This conflict between his own appreciation of the sense world and his spiritual rejection of it is basic to Blake's personality; nevertheless the rejection of nature appears only in short jottings, and outbursts while the positive aspects of nature are highlighted not only in his vivid and sensitive illustrations but in his views as finally seen in the long poems. That Blake's treatise is also intended as a deviation from Swedenborg is clear by his changing Swedenborg's title, *Heaven and Hell* to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* thereby reversing the meaning of the words 'heaven' and 'hell.' In it he was directing himself against the dualism that Swedenborg and the Neoplatonists promulgated. For them the soul was debased by the body, just as for the rationalist thinkers instinct ruined the intellect, this also being in some ways the code of orthodox Christian morality. Blake's aim in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is the opposite; not to divide body and soul but to integrate the physical with the intellectual and spiritual life to form a totality

of experience. This is why Blake's "Devil" preaches "an improvement of sensual enjoyment"(K., 154). This devil becomes the personification of energy; which is positive, while the Angel who represents conventional patterns of thought is negative. It is this theory, as we will see, which gives meaning to the inversions that this poem contains. Most of the ideas Blake stated here would be elaborated in more ambiguous language in later Prophetic Books and restated in the writing on *The Lãocoön* group in 1820, towards the end of his literary career.

In the Zoroastrian texts, the Body and the Soul commingle. Every being is seen in its Menok or heavenly aspect and in its Getik or physical state. For, as *The Gathas* tell us the wise one "didst give a body to the soul of life."⁴ The physical manifestation of the human soul then becomes, to quote Corbin, "God's most magnificent surety for His Creatures. It bears witness to the divine Being because it is the fullness of everything proceeding from Him, and it is the perfection of the other Forms . . . it is the seat of multiple energies."⁵

The physical creation in Mazdean cosmogony is closely linked with the idea of the spiritual beings, the Fravashis. These heavenly archetypes of all beings choose to pass from the Menok to the Getik state in order to assist Ahura Mazda protect his good creation against the assaults of Ahriman. *The Bundahishn* gives us an account of nine thousand years of the Creation myth, "for three thousand years everything proceeds by the will of Auharmazd, three thousand years there is an intermingling of the wills of Auharmazd and Ahriman, and the last three thousand years the evil spirit is disabled."⁶



Pl. 49 A Fravashi from Persepolis.

Ohrmazd asked these spiritual beings:

Which seems to you the more advantageous, when I shall present you to the world? That you shall contend in a bodily form with the fiend and the fiend shall perish, and in the end I shall have you prepared again perfect and immortal, . . . or that it be always necessary to provide you protection from the destroyer.⁷

The Fravashis chose to participate actively in the struggle against evil, during the period of mixture and descending to earth were incarnated in material form. It is this act which gives their name its full meaning of "those who have chosen"(See Plate 49).⁸ The distinctive symbolic representation of the Fravashi is the winged figure or Farohar, the personal guardian angel who watches every thought, word and deed of an individual, helping to differentiate between good and evil. The Urvan or Soul of the individual which listens to and obeys its divine guide moves progressively towards perfection. Pictorially the design, as we can see in the example from Persepolis, represents in itself the idea of unity. The exact circle, the sweeping outspread wings suggest the perception and soaring heaven-wards of the unmanifested godhead, while the portrayal of the Divine figure in the physical form of a noble human being is indicative of the importance of human life. The Fravashi then unites universal spirit with universal matter, for matter is meaningless without the spirit and the spirit cannot act without matter. The function of both, united and one, is to bring forth the perfected world. Thus matter and spirit in this portrayal of the Divinity are not merely interrelated but interassimilated and the Fravashi becomes symbolic of the unity that is the constant stress of Zoroastrianism.

The material world is then a tool designed by the Deity to entrap the Lie and destroy it; material life on earth is part of a great plan and therefore it cannot be identified with evil. Only a strong earth can resist the Evil one who is the cause of disease and

death. No other religion therefore gives as much importance to making this material earth fruitful. Besides this, each aspect of material creation is under the patronage of the seven spiritual entities the Amesha Spentas; Ohrmazd adopted man, Vohuman cattle, Ashavahist fire, Spendarmat Earth, Hordad Water, Amardad Plants, and Sherevar metals and the sky. Hence the two worlds of spirit and matter are fully forged together, or married, in their battle against evil in this period of intermingling on Earth. "The worldly existence is the fruit of the spiritual, and the spiritual is its root,"⁹ and "Every visible and tangible thing emerges from an unmanifest to a manifest state . . . This tangible material world was created from an invisible . . . spiritual world and had its origins there. The visible and tangible indicates the existence of an invisible and intangible world which is spiritual."¹⁰

When we read *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* closely we find that Blake's primary concern is to refute the "Errors" taught by conventional morality. Blake was confuting eighteenth-century versions of 'heaven' and 'hell' in this tractate, he was speaking of vain "Angels who are all religious"(K., 157) and Devils who preached "impulse not . . . rules"(K., 158), and not as yet dealing with the vexed issue of primary good and evil. Blake's argument here is not a type of Satanism, heaven and hell is not the simple inversion of moral good and evil. Besides, he attaches two meanings to the word 'hell,' one real, the other ironic. As Morton Paley notes, Blake is not saying "Evil be thou my good," he is actually ironically attacking the repression of the times which regarded God's life-giving Energy as Satanic.¹¹ However while this was one attempt to understand life's most disturbing problem Blake would soon discover that evil could not be so easily explained away.

Any study of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* has to take into account the plates

which Blake used in the work, because they are not so much illustrations as statements re-emphasizing pictorially, the message of the poem. Within the concept of 'Marriage' as union is implicit a beginning, a fusion with which to create a new order. The first plate of Blake's poem shows the uniting embrace of several couples where the pink and red flames of "Hell" sweep energetically across the cool, blue stillness of Heaven, and life and creativity unite the soul and body, 'angel' and 'Devil' in eighteenth century terms. Rintrah, the personification of wrath, "shakes his fires"(K., 148) against the falsehoods and hypocrisy of earlier codes of morality. Blake born "thirty-three years since" is to be the Prophet of the "new heaven [which] is begun," and which will finally result in the reconciliation of energy and reason, self and the soul; negating the Fall, restoring human happiness and liberating "the just man." The design of a liberated soul rejoicing in the life giving flames of Hell, and a woman giving birth, re-stresses the theme of creativity.

In Plate Three Blake gives us very clearly his idea of the duality of this world:

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason
and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence.

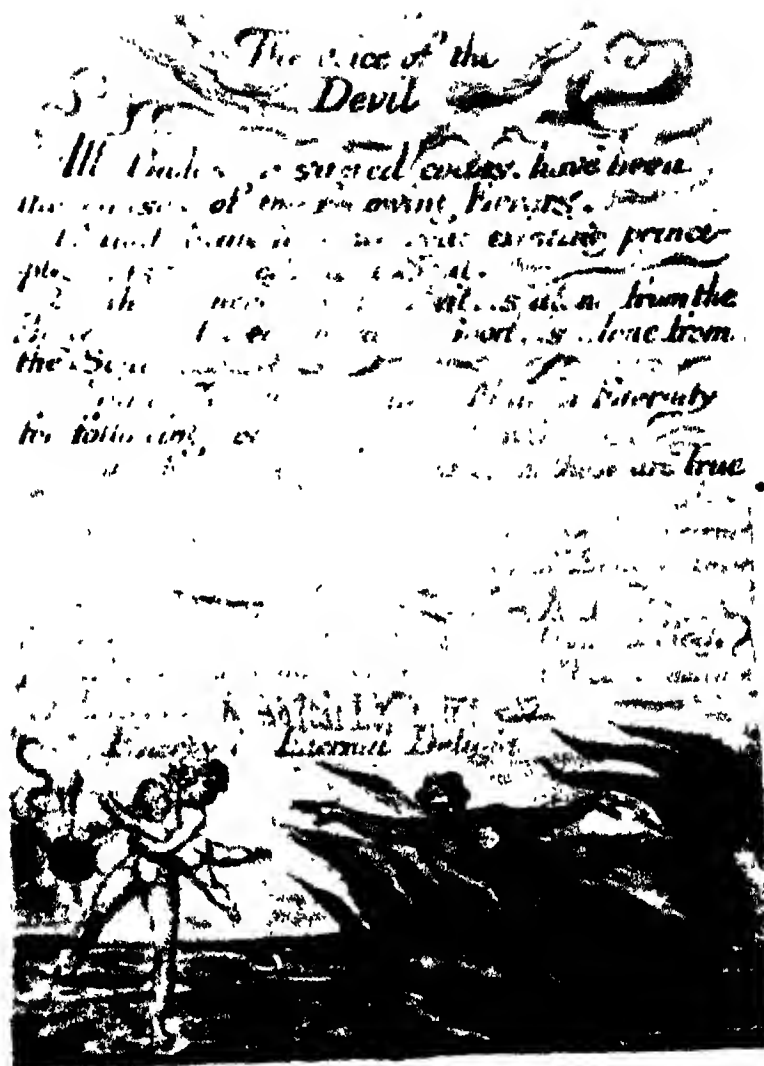
(MHH K., 149)

Blake's theory of contraries needs emphasis because it underlies a good deal of his theology, which can be called dialectical. Perhaps, as Mark Schorer observes, Blake took some of these ideas from alchemy, the central tenet of which is that all things possess a hidden quality or meaning opposite to their surface appearance (See Plate 50).¹² The message Blake is trying to convey here is to be found in the illuminated text where the word "Contraries" stands out in bold black lettering as do the words "Human existence". It is emphasized therefore that on this earth, in our human life alone, do both Blake and Zoroastrianism find the contraries "necessary." As we have seen, Blake's attitude towards the earth varies, for he practised what his Harper sang and believed "The man

who never alters his opinion is like standing water and breeds reptiles of the mind"(*MHH K.*, 156), but he did believe in pre-existence, "Ages of Eternity before my mortal life"(*Letters to Flaxman K.*, 802) as much as he believed that the Seven Spirits created the earth and that nature was a creation of the science of the Elohim.¹³ For Blake, creativity--his art and his writings--was representative of an idea already seen in the mind. The act of physical creation too was that of giving a visual image to a pre-existent or spiritual reality, so nature then was a physical illustration of the Divinity and Creation . . . an act of mercy leading to regeneration.

The *Sikand-Gumanik-Vigar* also stresses that the contraries "are manifest from the good and evil which are in the world . . . because in the worldly existence there is a manifestation of the competing nature and injuriousness of the things one towards the other."¹⁴ So while the contraries are by no means ideal states the harmony that will be achieved after the battle of opposites on this earth will be far more meaningful than a simple reconciliation of opposing ideas. Therefore till mankind returns to the lost unity of perfection the contraries are necessary for moral, intellectual and emotional progression. Just as the Fravashis "chose" mortality in order to help bring about the Frashokereti, or perfect world, so too Blake's characters are educated through choice between the states of good and evil. The point is that each man has to choose the correct 'heaven or hell.' Bibles, sacred codes, the voice of reason or the voice of the multitude can all be restraints to the true wisdom that is found by each individual in the "Eternal Delight" of Energy.

If we turn again to the illustrations the scene depicted at the end of Plate 4 is very similar to the later colour print called "The Good and Evil Angels," yet the contrast between the two provides an insight into Blake's mental development. For the young Blake overthrowing hidebound conventions took priority and an attractive Devil stretches





Pl. 52 "Good and Evil Angels."



Pl. 53

"Good and Evil Angels" - close-up.

out with power and passion trying to rescue an infant from the restraining clutches of the Good Angel. The sea of Time and Space surges beneath them, while the light of the Sun illuminates the scene from above. But the Devil of energy is chained and in fetters and although the infant casts his eyes back at him the Angel holds him too tightly for escape. Blake was here very much of the Devil's party unlike his attitude in the later print. Perhaps reflecting his disappointment with the calamitous results of unfettered Energy during the French revolution, Blake no longer glorified unrestrained power. Good and evil were no longer words to play with but harsh inescapable facts. In the second plate a hideous, blind Devil moves forward menacingly his hand almost touching a terrified child who clutches at an anguished good angel. The child's eyes reflect the horror of unseeing evil and lust for power, and although fetters hold the Devil down the angel barely manages to keep innocence out of his grasping hands (See plates 51-53).¹⁵ The contrast in the facial expressions of the two pictures convinces us that in Blake's mind the ambiguity no longer existed.

To return to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, the plates which follow continue the arguments regarding the superiority of Energy over Reason after which Blake gives us his "Proverbs of Hell" which, although inspired partly by Lavater's *Aphorisms*,¹⁶ bear an uncanny resemblance to the "Counsels of the Ancient Sages" found in the *Pahlavi Texts*. These vary from, "The man who knows a lot and believes little is the greater sinner," "Good words divorced from Good deeds are manifest unbelief." "All forms of courage need wisdom, wisdom knowledge, knowledge experience," to the down to earth "So far as you possibly can, do not bore your fellow men." If Blake believed "The Thankful receiver bears a plentiful harvest" (*MHH K.*, 152), the sage Adhurbadh advised "Be grateful so that you may be worthy of good things," while his "No one over broke his back by saying his prayers or got foul breath by asking politely," can be matched by "As

the plow follows words, so God rewards prayer"(K., 152).¹⁷

Likewise, the roots of Zoroastrianism can be seen in ideas of the Ameshaspands or Amesha Spentas and Fravashis, "the makers and governors, the shapers and overseers, the keepers and preservers of these creations of Ahura Mazda"¹⁸ and in Plate 11 Blake seems to be tracing the development of religion from such anthropomorphic origins to the rigid system in which Man himself was forgotten. While a stern floating fravashi like figure at the end of the plate reflects Blunt's view of Jupiter Pluvius and is seen by Hagstrum as "on the way to becoming Blake's Jehovah-Urizen," seemingly an illustration of rigid organised religion, a duality is apparent for in contrast a floating female figure hovers over a prostrate male enwrapping him in flames of renewal in plate 14 (see plates 54-55).¹⁹ The contrasting or dualistic use of these two flying figures takes us back to the dualistic use of this design which we have briefly discussed in Chapter II. Blake's text speaks of the end of time when "the world will be consumed in fire"(K., 154) and the apocalypse of the Bible of Hell is strikingly Zoroastrian for it prophesises a time of renewal when all creation will become "infinite and holy"(K., 154). While the Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel have learnt from the East "the first principles of human perception," Blake learns in his Printing House in hell how knowledge is transmitted through the generations. In the caves, chambers and palaces of the "Eagle-like men" built in the cliffs the old "rubbish" of outdated ideas gets cleared away and flaming fires melt metals for the creation of new ideas.

While it seems apparent that on earth there will always be two classes of men--those who welcome change and those who resist, at the end of Plate 15 in an illustration already mentioned we find what Keynes calls "The Eagle of Genius carrying up the Viper of Reason"(See Plate 56)²⁰ an attempt to reconcile energy and restraint in the creation of a new order. The serpent has been seen in many of Blake's sources as a symbol of matter, and Bryant taught Blake that "in the ritual of Zoroaster, the great expanse of heaven and even nature was described under the symbol of a serpent."²¹ If Blake,



The ... objects
and
rivers
their
under
And particularly they studied the genius of each
country placing it under its mental deity.
... which
the vulgar of ...
the mental deities ...
thus began Priesthood. To
Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales
at length they pronounced that the Gods
did not exist. ...
That men forgot that All deities reside
in the human breast.



The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true, as I have heard from Hell.

For the flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life, and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy whereas it now appears finite & corrupt.

Man will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment.

But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged: this I shall do by pointing in the internal method, by ceremonies, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid.

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite.

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern,

A Memorable Fancy

As I was in a Painting house in Hell to see the
 north, which knowledge is transmitted from gen-
 eration to generation in uninterrupted
 In the first chamber was a Dragon-Man clear
 and day the children from a cave mouth rather a
 room of a Dragon, it is following, on a way.
 In the second chamber was a tiger holding round
 the neck of the cave, and others attending it with gold
 and silver and various articles.
 In the third chamber was an eagle with wings
 and feathers of all, he covered the inside of the cave
 to be invisible around with chambers of all size like a
 man, who built palace in the immense walls.
 In the fourth chamber were lions of bloody fire
 sitting around a melting, the rocks into many pieces.
 In the fifth chamber were diamonds, pearls, which
 were the material with the expense.
 There they were received by Man who occupied
 the north chamber and with the home of the look-
 was arranged in various ways.



following such sources, saw it at this stage as a symbol of the marriage of contraries, it perhaps explains his own dualistic use of the numerous forms of the floating figure, his very popular symbol (See Appendix E).

The remaining plates of the "Memorable Fancies" continue Blake's argument with conventional religion. Man's lot on this earth is seen as being "between the black and white spiders"(K., 156) of good and evil. While each man must work out his own code of salvation Blake's Devil teaches that "the worship of God is: Honouring his gifts in other men"(K., 158). Unless man learns to respect individuals and humanity, mankind will become brutalised to the extent seen in the debased figure crawling on his hands and knees at the end of Plate Twenty-four, an illustration of the results of blindly following conventional rules, for "One Law for the lion and Ox is oppression." Jesus Christ himself becomes the final spokesman of the Bible of Hell for he preached the greatest individualism and always "acted from impulse not rules"(K., 158). This argument ends with the Angel embracing the flames of fire and himself becoming a Devil, and Blake's promise of "The Bible of Hell" in which he would expand these ideas.

Throughout the poem Blake has also been developing his theory of the sexes. For him love, in which the deepest instincts of man operate, is rooted in eternity and involves both the spiritual and the sensual. Therefore in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* another orthodox duality which is dismissed is that of the two aspects of love, the good and the bad, the divine and the physical. For Blake, as for the Zoroastrian, both are united and both positive. In Zoroastrianism the physical act itself has sanctity for the union brought about bears spiritual results, leading not only to the growth of the entire personality but also adding warriors to the good creation's forces against evil.

All copies of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* conclude with "The Song of

Liberty," reiterating the superiority of creativity over conservatism, celebrating the triumph of Energy in this first revolutionary myth where the new born order overthrows the establishment. Looking at the political events of the time, particularly the American and French Revolutions it seemed as if Blake was indeed the prophet of a new era, which would end with total liberty for all mankind. In France the Bastille had fallen and the exuberant appearance of Urthona, the Zoa of Imagination, at the end of the work is significant. Imagination and Faith had been freed from the restrictions of reason, and Blake implied that only through the overthrow of the tyranny of conservatism could the mind be released. The tiny birds soaring freely upwards in the final illustrations serve to emphasize this point.

I

While in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 'good' and 'evil' are personalised terms for the Soul and Body and their reconciliation is advocated, in *The Songs of Innocence and Experience*, published in 1794, Blake uses the expressions with their universal implications. The "contraries" of heaven and hell, body and soul are "married" in Blake's world and in Zoroastrianism, for the material and spiritual combine to form a unity of being, however the clash of primary good and evil has no reconciliation in the Zoroastrian context. Ultimately, its cosmology tells us, there will be a transcendence of this world of good and evil, but on this earth these dualities must not only be acknowledged but also accepted. Blake's philosophy too is dualistic for the interaction of Innocence and Experience, good and evil underlies his cosmic vision. Among Zoroastrian scholars there is much controversy regarding the use of the term 'dualism' with reference to the Zoroastrian faith; its votaries often reject what seems to imply a

primitivism unlike the serene belief in one, omnipotent, Father Creator. Yet it is this very recognition of an evil principle that makes Zoroastrianism philosophically more acceptable to a thinking mind, it being impossible to ignore the negative or dark side of existence. Zoroaster's explanation of evil is closely linked with his emphasis on man's freedom of choice. In *Yasna* 30 we have the parable of the Twin Spirits who can be seen to represent goodness and evil not only in the world but also within each man. S.N. Kanga sees them as twin aspects of the human mind²² a state very similar to Blake's interpretation of the Spectre and the Emanation, the dualities within every individual. "Man is bad or good as he unites himself with bad or good spirits: tell me with whom you go and I'll tell you what you do" (*Lavater K.*, 88). Man contains within himself the universal perception which clashes with his egocentric selfhood, he can attract to himself either the Ahuric powers of creativity or the Ahrimanic negation and destructiveness, the choice lies with each individual:

Now at the beginning the twin spirits have declared their Nature;
The better and the evil,
In thought and word and deed. And between the two
... Each man must choose for himself.

(*Ys.30 sl.2-3*).²³

For Blake the choice seemed to lie between Innocence and Experience. In *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* we find that the illustrations of the world of Innocence are suggestive of the open-heartedness of childhood; birds escape upwards, children rush forward with open arms, and sheep graze peacefully. The rosy colouring harmonizes with the richness of nature, a lush world seen in all its forms, guarded by the

good shepherd carefully tending his flock. The relationship here is that of faith; children with parents, nurse and wards, man and woman, angels and man; while caring angels seem to guard the scene pictorially. In 1789 *Innocence* was on the surface a simple almost mindless one-dimensional existence whose sentimentality sharpened the satire of poems on contemporary Eighteenth-century life such as *Holy Thursday*, *The Chimney Sweeper*, and *The Little Black Boy*. In the other *Songs of Innocence* however the real world is excluded, and the image is one of all pervading security, the spiritual condition of childhood where one's needs are completely satisfied:

He is meek and he is mild;
 He became a little child
 I a child, and thou a lamb
 We are called by his name.

(*The Lamb, S of I. K.*, 115, 11.15-18)

The Little Boy Lost is immediately balanced by *The Little Boy Found* for in *The Songs of Innocence* reassurance is always at hand:

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh
 And thy Maker is not by.
 Think not thou canst weep a tear
 And thy Maker is not near.

(*On Another's Sorrow K.*, 123, 11.29-32)

It is this comforting presence of an all powerful benign father-figure, ruling a spiritual world of unchanging order that makes *Innocence* a self-contained closed world where awareness of a harsher reality does not yet lead to doubt or questioning.²⁴ It is essentially a religious vision where God's goodness and concern are manifest, and evils



Pl. 57

Titlepage *Songs of Experience*.

can be overcome by the strength of faith. The illustrations, full of light and colour, portray a pastoral Arcadia.

But, as both Blake and Zoroastrianism realised, this could be only one side of the picture. On the title page of the combined *Songs of Innocence and Experience* we see illustrated the fallen Adam and Eve being cast out of Paradise by a blast of fire. Significantly they are portrayed as a very young couple, it is almost as if they have emerged from a childlike state and are now going forward to grow up in the world. The word "Experience" on the title page to *The Songs of Experience* is depicted in a harsh style without any of the usual decorations, a forbidding bar which spreads across the page. The illustration shows two young persons mourning beside the corpses of their parents or elders, suggesting that the protective father figure of Innocence has been lost never to return (see plate 57).²⁵ The use of childhood and adolescence in *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* is deliberate because generally childhood is seen as a state of innocence, and each individual experiences his own kind of Fall at puberty which changes this innocence to experience. Two visual effects must be noted before we turn to the text. The first is the use of a blue tint in all the colours used in *The Songs of Experience*, for the rosy warmth of innocence has been deliberately replaced by the cold light of reason; Secondly, while the plates of the world of Innocence seemed filled with people, the plates of Experience have very few human figures, it is a lonely, grown up world without the sense of community that surrounds childhood.

The Christian stress on the Fall is apparent in the poem *Introduction*, in *The Songs of Experience* with the use of words such as "lapsed" "weeping" "fallen" and "night," but Blake almost immediately moves beyond the Christian connotations of this earth as a fallen world with the call for the Earth's "return." Life in this world is therefore seen by the poet as a process where one accepts the presence of evil as a stage through which

man must pass on his way towards ultimate fulfilment and unity. The Bard's call to the Earth and *Earth's Answer* can be associated with hope springing up in the midst of despair, a new day dawning, or what Wolf Mankowitz calls a positive movement,²⁶ for the Earth raises her head from darkness and in the grey despairing world demands of the Bard:

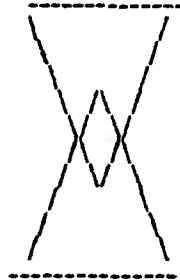
Break this heavy chain

That does freeze my bones around.

(Earth's Answer K., 211, 11.21-22)

While the traditional view would be to regard, with Foster-Damon, experience as a stage of cynicism and error,²⁷ the Zoroastrian attitude, which seems closer to Blake, is to accept that "there has not been and will not be anything which is not good or evil, or a mixture of both."²⁸ Mythologically, the birth of evil is explained by the Zurvan myth of the primeval twins, while the Prophet raised the idea of the conflict between forces of good and evil, common in all cultures, to the position of a major cosmic battle. While Zoroastrian theology acknowledges only one God (as we see from the second *Gatha*), its philosophy finds two primeval causes, "existence" and "non-existence," "life" versus "death," the Blakean innocence versus experience. When Ahrimanic corruption broke through into Ahura Mazda's created Universe the most devastating afflictions fell on the sky, the earth, water, vegetation, and fire. "I will make the whole creation of Auharmazd vexed," claimed the evil one who, "sprang, like a snake out of the sky down to the earth." The whole world being injured, "Avarice, want, pain, hunger, disease, lust and lethargy were diffused by him abroad."²⁹ Man too was affected, for in this world of mixture he came to acquire two opposing dimensions, that of the divinity and that of his own selfhood. While this idea is found in many cultures and down the ages Henry Corbin explains it diagrammatically in the Zoroastrian context as a triangle of light imposed on a

triangle of darkness, making earthly life a combination; the Pahlavi "Gumezishn."



"Every faithful act a man does is done through his dimension of light. Then he is wholly luminous, celestial . . . conversely his betrayals and denials come from his dimension of darkness, then he is wholly dark . . . dense opaque."³⁰ This world of mixture, like Blake's world of experience still preserves hope. The soul of Earth, Gush Urvan, is the preserver of goodness in the material earth. She declares her aim: "I will nourish the creatures,"³¹ and the heavenly conflict will be resolved, both in Blake and Zoroastrian cosmology, through the efforts of man on this earth.

In both Blake's writing and Zoroastrian philosophy the worst part of the world of experience is that it breeds fear and a denial of joy, thus leading to the sin of hypocrisy. Neither Blake nor Zoroastrianism understate the horrors of the struggle with evil and the harshness of the cruelties that the seed of evil has sown. In Blake's universe the primary impulse of life is creativity, the fulfilling of the imagination; a restricting of the imaginative impulse therefore leads to a reduction of life, what Frye sees as a "death impulse."³² For Blake therefore the primary evil of experience is restraint, either of the self or of others. The primary condition of innocence was freedom, Hagstrum's "uninhibited sexuality"³³ or freedom to love seen in the designs as well as the poems; freedom to

laugh, freedom of the imagination, all found in that golden arcadia. In contrast, is the severely limited world of the "charter'd street" "cold" Church, and "Thou shalt not," written over the door of *The Garden of Love*; all part of the basic evil of an imposed as well as self-imposed tyranny. Blake had written:

To hinder another is not an act . . . it is a restraint on action both in ourselves and in the person hinder'd, for he who hinders another omits his own duty at the same time. Murder is hindering Another. Theft is Hindering Another. Backbiting Undermining, Circumventing and whatever is negative is Vice.

(Lavater K., 88)

With this in mind *The Songs of Experience* can be divided so as to show "hindering" at three general levels. Firstly, that of political and social oppression, secondly, hindering at the level of feeling where a restraint is placed on sexual and emotional impulse and thirdly, the hindering of man's freedom due to religious orthodoxy. While these levels often merge within a poem, in each of Blake's *Songs of Experience* the evil of such restraint is exposed. Institutions which tyrannized and the fanatical zeal of the anti-Jacobian movement³⁴ both led to mental slavery in eighteenth-century England along with resulting wars and oppressions, aspects of life exposed in *Holy Thursday*, *The Chimney Sweeper* and the anguished *London*. The repression of the physical body turns love to denial and jealousy and as the energy and power of love, which can contain within itself visions of infinity, is denied, love itself becomes limited and limiting. The Clod's song in *The Clod and the Pebble* reflects the paradox of unselfish life-creating forces, for it gives freely of itself unlike the selfishness of the pebble, hardened by experience, bitter and self-centred:

Love seeketh only self to please

To bind another to its delight
 Joys in another loss of ease
 And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.

(K., 211, 11.9-12)

The rejected motto of *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* restresses this very point:

The Good are attracted by Men's perceptions
 And Think not for themselves
 Till Experience teaches them to catch
 And to cage the fairies & Elves.

(Note Book K., 183, 11.1-4)

In this divided world when feeling is forbidden *The Sick Rose* portrays love corrupted into torture, while inhibition and prohibitions destroy impulse and love consummated becomes a crime. Such perversions in *The Angel* and *The Garden of Love* are spelt out in the message of *A Little Girl Lost*:

Children of the future Age
 Reading this indignant page
 Know that in a former time
 Love! sweet love! was thought a crime.

(K., 219, 11.1-5)

The moralising divisions of spirit and sense had been attacked by Blake's call for a marriage of body and soul. But to the eighteenth-century code of conduct every sign of exuberance, even joy appeared a threat, an attitude antithetical to the belief in the holiness of all aspects of creation, the vision held by both Blake and Zoroaster.

The Lilly, My Pretty Rose Tree and *Ah! Sunflower* all placed on a single page of *The Songs* were perhaps intended to be read together, for in that order they are seen to contain a total philosophy of love.³⁵ The lily, significantly is the flower of Khordad Haurvatat (Perfection) in the Flower symbolism of Zoroastrianism which assigns an individual flower to each of the archangels, and there as in Blake, stands for perfection and beauty.³⁶ The lily is the perfection man seeks in love but never attains. Longing for this culmination, man finally renounces the search for the sake of the rose he already possesses only to find it turns away in jealousy. Repression and jealousy are the sins of earthly love but in *Ah! Sunflower* the movement is beyond the love available on earth, a reaching out to eternity, after "The traveller's journey is done"(K., 215). While *A Poison Tree* also deals with repression, it is the emotion of hatred not love which is suppressed and through hypocrisy grows into a poisonous fruit which has the power to kill. The healing power of feeling seen in the world of Innocence, changed to the utter destruction and casual callousness of *The Fly*, only reinforces the unimportance of life in a world without sanctity.

The hypocrisy engendered by the restraints of religion can be seen in the third stage of the process of experience where religion is made a deliberate "mystery" which priests take care never to explain. Here *Infant Sorrow* seems to imply a deliberate contrast to the holy birth of the infant Jesus, a traditionally popular topic with Christian hymn composers. That birth was to bring all suffering to an end, but in *Infant Sorrow* the entire Christian tradition of Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love has been perverted. The culmination of experience is seen in *The Human Abstract* which is the opposite of *The Divine Image* of Innocence and its deliberate use of parallel words and similar imagery only deepens the irony. The perverted mind and heart smugly justifies suffering:

Pity would be no more
 If we did not make somebody Poor
 And Mercy no more could be
 If all were as happy as we.

(K., 217, 11.1-4)

In the illustration a Urizenic figure struggles in the net of false beliefs while the main image of the poem is that of the tree of falsehood--in contrast to the tree of life--taking root in the human brain. The image of the Creator has changed from a God of love to a God of wrath; Man being made in the image of God reflects this anger:

Cruelty has a Human Heart
 And Jealousy a Human Face
 Terror the Human Form Divine
 And Secrecy the Human Dress.

(K., 221, 11.1-5)

The starkness of these words reinforces the fact that for Blake experience does not stand for a 'felix culpa,' there is nothing beneficial about a state of anger, despair and wrath, just as there is no glossing over the evil of Ahriman. In this, and in contrast in his insistence on the fact of innocence, even in this "fallen" world, Blake departs from usual Christian theology. Watt's *Divine Songs for Children*, on which *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* were based, taught children that they were:

By nature and by practice too
 A wretched slave to sin.³⁷

To Watts, as to any orthodox Christian, innocence was impossible after the Fall. Blake is thus implicitly denying the emphasis on original sin. And while he recognises the fact of

evil, it has to be tackled stoically, for the dialectic of this world has a promised end. While on this earth the ideal will conflict with the actual, it must be accepted that here, to quote Frye "The actual makes the ideal look helpless and the ideal makes the actual look absurd."³⁸

Dualism is found not only in the material of Blake's works but in the very structure of his language itself, not merely in the *Songs* but in the entire corpus of his writings. His language shows a basic structure of contraries especially in the opposing of major terms, "life" and "death" "night" and "day" "love" and "joy" opposing "sorrow" and "fear" "God" versus "Satan," "form" versus "spectre."³⁹ As Blake would say many years later:

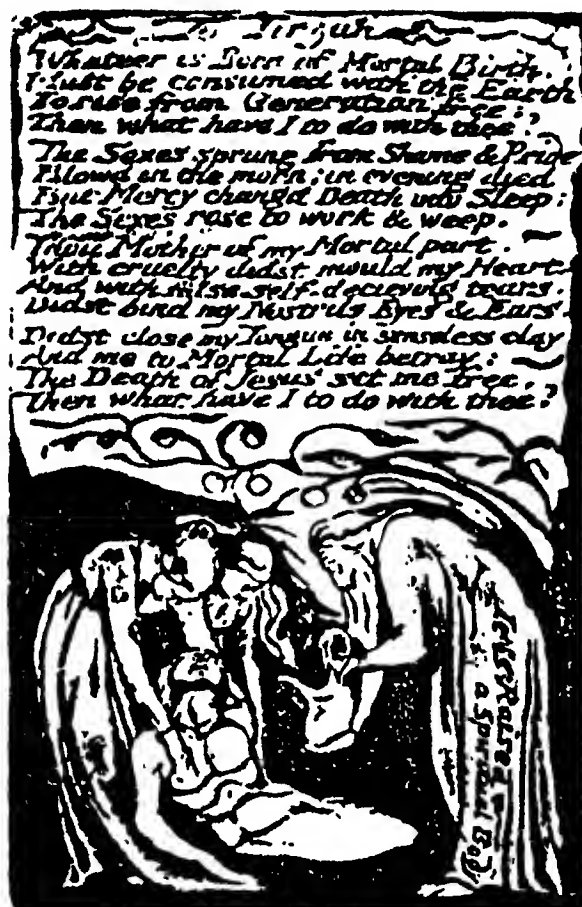
And this is the manner of the Sons of Albion in their strength
 They take Two Contraries which are call'd qualities with which
 Every substance is clothed: they name them Good and Evil.

(Jerusalem K., 629.11.7-9)

Blake, by presenting the innocent songs of the child along with their antithesis, was preserving his vision of a world in which he would not permit a pessimistic present to cancel out the happiness possible. It is this balancing of the two aspects which brings us back to Zoroastrianism, for that religion accounts for both the bright and dark side of creation.

Zoroastrianism sees evil as an actuality, not as unripe good nor as good hidden under a disguise. Man must live by the law of Asha or Righteousness, all the while fully aware of the counter law of the Druj or the Lie, the existence of wickedness which is equally present. One does not negate the other, both exist and both are constantly at





work within man. In Blake's words:

Man is a two-fold being, one part capable of evil and the other capable of good; that which is capable of good is not also capable of evil, but that which is capable of evil is also capable of good.

(Lavater K., 80)

Crabb-Robinson records Blake's own attitude towards evil in his *Diary*, "We passed over . . . to good and evil . . . he allowed indeed that there are errors, mistakes . . . and if these be evil then there is evil. But these are only negations." However, typically, Blake then contradicts himself. We spoke of the Devil and I observed, that . . . I thought the Manichaeon doctrine, or that of two Principles, a rational one. He assented to this and asserted that he did not believe in the omnipotence of God, the language on that subject is only poetical or allegorical. . . ." "He asserted that the Devil is eternally created--not by God but by God's permission. And when I objected that permission implies power to prevent he did not seem to understand me."⁴⁰

Blakean ethics and Zoroastrian theology give man a prominent role in the struggle between the contrary forces, man's role on earth being that of helping creation reach perfection. The passivity of childlike innocence is therefore not enough for man has to face and overcome disorder, evil and destruction in order to reach his goal. To achieve this Zoroastrianism preaches the necessity of purity of mind and body, the heart and the head both married together. Knowledge and devotion must work side by side for the salvation not only of the individual but for the collective soul of all humanity.

It is this salvation, the breaking free from all troubles that we see in the last of *The Songs of Experience*. In early copies of the joint collection Blake concluded with a spiritual figure borne aloft by winged cherubs, (see plates 58-59)⁴¹ signifying that the

Eternal man has risen out of the world of contrary states to the perfection beyond. According to Keynes the poem *To Tirzah* was added as the last poem of the group in about 1801 and is therefore a later poem than *A Divine Image* (1791) which was not included in the *Songs of Experience* by Blake. The second illustration here is from *To Tirzah*, it shows a saintly man with a vessel either baptizing or offering water to a dying man. On his dress are engraved the words "It is raised a spiritual Body." Tirzah can be seen as the female generative principle and here Blake's last word on the theme of the Contraries in *The Songs* is an affirmation of the triumph of the immortal spirit. This has been seen of course as a Christian affirmation⁴² in which the generative body is destroyed to attain a higher innocence promised by Christ's resurrection:

The Death of Jesus set me free

Then what have I to do with thee?

(K., 220, 11.15-16)

but the idea of a feminine figure rising "from generation free" is also suggestive of the image of the Daena or conscience who accompanies the soul on its journey of ascent after the dissolution of the body.

Yasht 22 gives us the allegory of the Daena, the Inner Self or religious conscience appearing to the soul in the shape of a maiden of dazzling beauty, the image of the soul's own good thoughts, words, and deeds in life, a reflection of its own character. Tirzah's beauty parallels this, for it is proclaimed in *The Song of Solomon* "Thou art beautiful; o my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem" (6:4). But beauty is only a reflection of the Righteousness, by which the Daena survives evil and experience, emerging to lead the soul to the realms of beatitude. Only by passing through experience is the soul developed enough to find heavenly bliss; the journey is painful for life is often full of seemingly

inexplicable contraries but this is the price of the choice mankind was given:

What is the price of Experience? Do men buy it for a song?

Or wisdom for a dance in the street? No, it is bought with the price

Of all that a man hath, his house, his wife, his children

Wisdom is sold in the desolate market, where none come to buy.

And in the wither'd field where the farmer plows for bread in vain.

(Vala K., 290, 11.397-401)

II

The price of wisdom being so high, it is much easier to escape with the *Book of Thel* into a sheltered existence where there are no contraries to choose from. To remain static is to remain unhurt but the vision of Blake and Zoroastrianism is the opposite of this attitude. Man has infinite capacities which he must develop to the fullest. The black and white divisions of a world only sweet and innocent, or a world utterly depraved cannot challenge. The task is to see life fully in all its aspects. Life, fully developed is often seen as four-fold. This idea of four-foldness as an archetypal symbol is common to many cultures; Zoroastrianism too sees man as Four-fold: The vital man, with body and tissues and bones but possessing the desire for perfection, the psychological man, possessed of the Baodha or intellect, the ethical man endowed with Chisti, Wisdom, and the Spiritual man who unites in himself the powers of the Urvan and Fravashi and is possessed of Haurvatat and Ameretat, Perfection and Immortality.⁴³ Blake's belief in Four-fold vision can be examined in the light of this concept. Single vision is that seen by the eye; two-fold vision perceives the values of all things, three-fold vision recognizes

the emotions and inspires creativity while fourfold vision is the ultimate, reaching the point of ecstasy. To see the contraries of life and yet hold on to the vision beyond is true spiritual growth. Blake's complexity of vision lies in that even his apparently simple, childlike poems and pictures embody these depths of meaning.⁴⁴ In a startling anticipation of phenomenology Blake wrote:

I see Every thing I paint in this world, but Every body does not see alike.
To the Eyes of a Miser a guinea is more beautiful than the sun . . . The
tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes of others only a
green thing that stands in the way. Some see Nature all Ridicule and
Deformity and by these I shall not regulate my proportions; But to the
Eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself. As a Man
is, so he sees. As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers.

(Letter to Dr. Trusler K., 793).

and:

For double the vision my Eyes do see And a double vision is always
with me.

(Letter to Thomas Butts K., 817)

It is this multiplicity of vision that Blake will try to fathom in his most difficult lyric *The Tyger*, a poem whose symbolism comes close to the core of Zoroastrian belief as shall be seen in the next chapter.

In Zoroastrianism the soul develops by the philosophical acceptance of multiples from which arises choice. The Fravashis or choosers, have decided to descend into mortality in order to aid in the ultimate renovation of the earth. It is this same issue of choice, the moving beyond single vision, that Blake takes up in *The Book of Thel*. The choice offered to Thel is the choice offered to all human beings, action or non-action,

energy or lassitude. In the *Pahlavi Texts* the most important feature of life is action: "In the vital energy of the human being, there is a thought: Therein Spenta Armaiti abides. In this thought there is a word: Therein abides Ashi Vanuhi . . . And in this word there is an Action therein abides Daena."⁴⁵

The message of both philosophies is that the good religion abides in Action. The Fravashis' chose to be incarnated in material bodies to counter the powers of Ahriman in the universe. Right action is man's task, he has to co-operate with nature to enrich the earth and strive to make it abundant in order to fight off the enemy who makes barren with disease and death. For the Zoroastrian therefore virtue becomes synonymous with fruitfulness, vice with sterility, and celibacy, far from being a virtue, becomes both unnatural and evil. On the moral plane the emphasis is on righteousness. Evil is personified as the "lie" the Druj, while righteousness, Asha, dwells in good works, for a man is finally judged by his deeds. The "Counsels" found in the *Pahlavi Texts* emphasise that man's duty after accepting the religion is "to take a wife, and to procreate earthly offspring." The same texts emphasize that it is only "The doing of good works [which] brings great hope of the Final Body which passes not away."⁴⁶

Blake's *The Book of Thel* shows us the importance of these ideas for it deals with the issue of inaction and a refusal to accept the vigorous duties of the mortal state. Thel's name is derived from the Greek root for "The will," but ironically her will seems static.⁴⁷ As a shepherdess Thel should be associated with the fecundity of natural life but the illustration on the title page shows her standing detached and remote distancing herself as it were from her true role, merely watching the embrace of a youth and maiden. While this young couple seem to emerge from slowly opening flowers, Thel has by her side an unopened bud whose droop suggests it will never have a chance to flower or flourish. Mellor sees in the weeping willow branch arching over the title page a resemblance to a

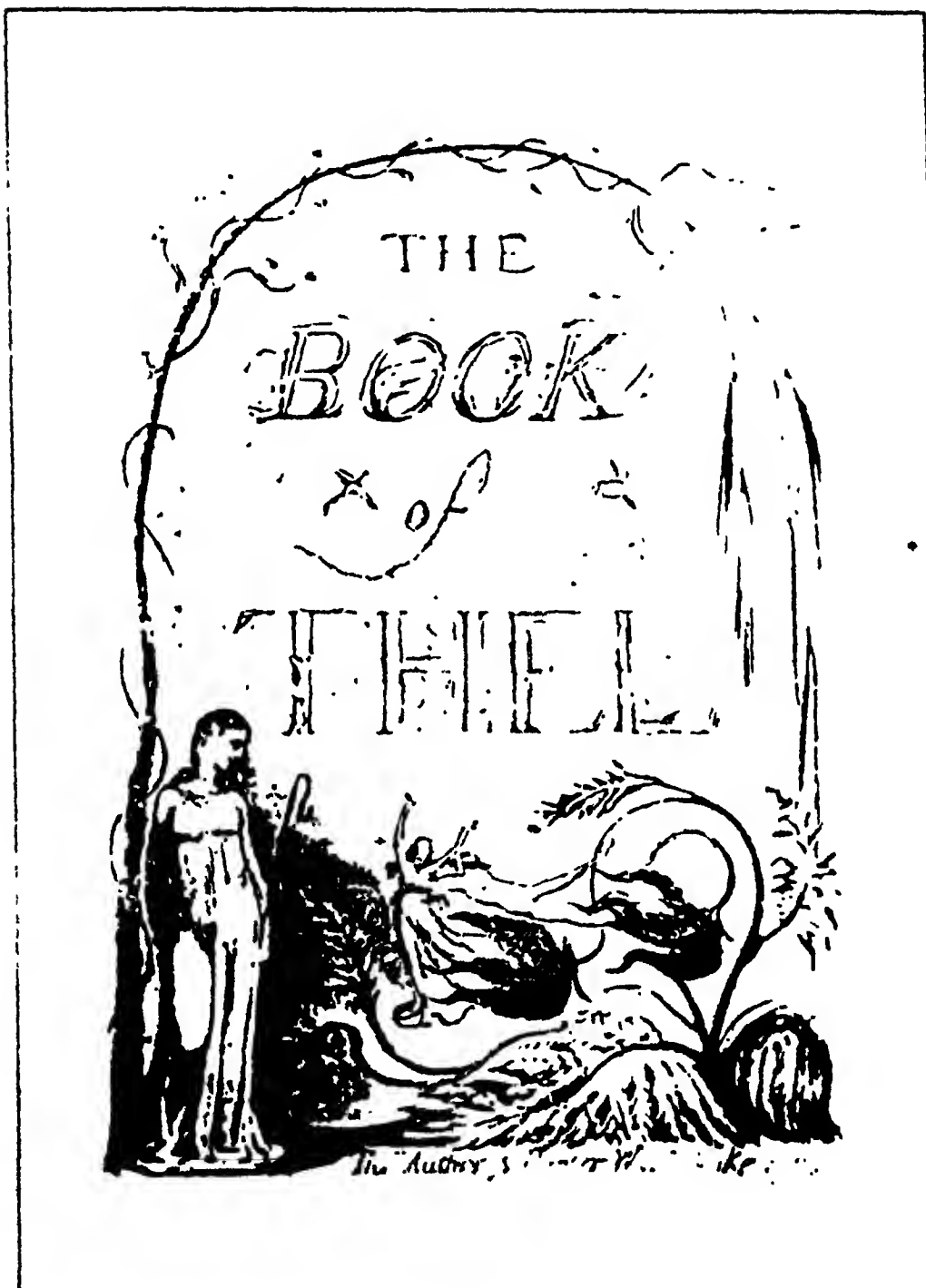
rounded tombstone engraved with Thel's name (See Plate 60).⁴⁸ Thel refuses to enter the world of generation for she is afraid to die physically, but by her negation of life she is already spiritually dead, and becomes the symbol of a virginity of ignorance that arises out of fear. Blake deliberately stresses the fact of generation in this poem, for the ripening earth is suggested in the family group of the first plate, where a mother welcomes a new-born child while the father who watches reclines on a head of ripe grain. For Blake as for the Zoroastrian abstinence is the denial of natural growth and a rejection of the processes of life, "Chastity and Abstinence" were to Blake "gods of the Heathen" and "Enjoyment, and not Abstinence, the food of the intellect":

Abstinence sows sand all over
 The ruddy limbs and flaming hair,
 But Desire Gratified
 Plants fruits of life and beauty there.

(*Notebook 1793, K.*, 178)

To use Schorer's words Blake's "was the social (or poetic) intention to assimilate all the diverse materials of experience, not the religious (or philosophical) intention to suppress those which are refractory."⁴⁹

The other issue in *The Book of Thel* is the concept of pre-existence which is used as a metaphor of innocence. Blake in *Thel* shows that he accepted the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul, its necessary descent and its return to a perfect existence. Thel is an unborn spirit unwilling to enter into material life, but aware that only by passing through experience can she fulfil her destiny. At least by questioning the world about her Thel represents a more complex consciousness than the children and figures of the world of innocence. Thel's obvious fear is that of sexuality from which she retreats, thereby





Pl. 62

Thel Pl. 5.

blighting nature. The tree under which she stands in Plate 2 is dying and in this plate as well as Plate 5 the plant behind her has gone to sere leaf without having experienced either bud or flower (See Plates 61-62).⁵⁰ While Thel retains the innocence of non-experience its limitations are only too obviously seen in the Plate 5 where, with her stiff figure, bowed face, arms crossed tightly and skirt spread protectively sheltering her, Thel is seen in direct contrast to the naked mother cherishing her infant at Thel's feet.

Thel's other fears and questionings are however as important as her fear of physical union. Just as she rejects the creativity of childbearing she also questions:

Why fades the lotus of the water

Why fade the children of the spring, born but to smile and fall?

(*Thel, K.*, 127, 11.6-7)

She hesitates to enter the transitory state we call life, the phrases used to describe which, "reflection in a glass" "shadows in the water," "dreams of infants" "a smile upon an infants face," all go to build up the picture of "transient day; like music in the air." The most perishable forms of life answer her and try to tell her that death is only a metamorphosis of one form of existence into another, but the Lily, the Cloud and the Worm cannot convince Thel as to why she should be born "to be at death the food of worms." The commitment that life requires is reiterated:

Then if thou art the food of worms, O virgin of the Skies

How great thy use, how great thy blessing!

Everything that lives -

Lives not alone nor for itself.

(*K.*, 129, ll. 25-27)

The vision of the tiny worm-baby sways Thel momentarily and she accepts the invitation of "The meanest thing," the Clod of Clay to enter life but seeing only "The couches of the dead" in "The land of sorrows and tears," and hearing only of contraries to which she cannot find answers she:

With a shriek

Fled back unhinder'd till she came into the Vales of Har.

(K., 130, ll.21-22)

In Zoroastrianism pre-existence forms the basis of the concept of the Fravashi which links the eternal world with earthly existence. The Fravashis have been compared to the Platonic Ideas, the Vedic Pitrs and the Roman Manes in that they constitute the eternal essence of things. The Fravashis are those who have lived with Ahura Mazda from all eternity, earthly creations being only imperfect copies of their perfection. Unlike the Platonic Ideas, the Fravashis are not abstractions, but have an objective existence and a role to play in the spiritual drama of the universe. Creation in Zoroastrianism is a necessity, God is forced to create the Universe as a weapon against Ahriman. Man is in the forefront of the fray because, as we have seen, he freely accepts the role of Ahura Mazda's ally his "Hamkar" or fellow-worker. For this, the Fravashis as we have seen, voluntarily come down to earth and materialize themselves into bodies. Every object, vegetable or mineral, every living form, from Ahura Mazda to the tiniest clod of clay, has this divine element within. Only evil is without a Fravashi. When a child is born, the Fravashi, which has existed from all eternity, comes down to this earth

as a guardian and guide of the soul. It is always the ideal towards which the soul should strive, for the Fravashi remains untouched and pure in the journey of life. While the soul is responsible for the choice between good and evil done in this world by an individual and receives its reward or punishment at the death of the physical body, the guardian Fravashi returns after life's journey to the celestial realm. In Zoroastrianism therefore each and every Fravashi must fulfil its role through descent on earth. Thel has failed because she refused.

Thel's spiritual defeat comes because she insists on seeing only one aspect of creation, a single, closed vision which however pure, is in itself negative because of its self-centredness. Blake's vision was much wider:

Now I a fourfold vision see
 And a fourfold vision is given to me
 'Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
 And threefold in soft Beulah's night
 And twofold Always. May God us keep
 From Single vision and Newton's sleep.

(Letter to Butts K., 818)

Self-centredness, or the selfhood, which would become the great sin of the *Prophetic Books* is here seen in its simplest form. If Thel had given of herself freely and joyously to a lover she would not only have experienced the ecstasy of sexual union but as a lover and mother she would have, in feeding and nourishing her infant, continued the life cycle. In this way, becoming one with the Earth mother, she would have learnt the Clod of Clay's faith:

How this is, sweet maid, I know not, and I cannot know;
I ponder, and I cannot ponder; yet I live and love.

(K., 129, 11.5-6)

Although *The Book of Thel* is seen as an allegory of the descent of the soul, Blake does not seem to be one with Taylor who declared "That the soul is punished through its union with the body."⁵¹ Blake does not support the theory that this earth is a punishment for some celestial sin or that the body is a curse. He believed that each phase of existence has meaning "Nor can any consummate bliss without being generated on Earth" (*Jerusalem K.*, 731, 11.42-43), besides stating "All life is Holy" (K., 74) and "God is in the lowest effects as well as in the highest causes; for he is become a worm that he may nourish the weak," "It is the God in *all* that is our companion & friend," and "Let it be remembered that creation is God descending according to the weakness of man, for our Lord is the word of God and every thing on earth is the word of God and in its essence is God" (*Lavater, K.*, 87). When the Matron Clay, representative of the Earth Mother, speaks of the heavenly Father as a husband "He that loves the lowly . . . binds his nuptial bands around my breast," Blake is echoing an ancient text "My mother is Spandarmat (the Earth) and my father is Ohrmazd."⁵²

Zoroastrianism sees the physical creation as in itself good, the corruption in it was, as we have seen, introduced by Ahriman, but these evils will be destroyed in the last days of the world. The Manichaean view that this body and this earth are made up of the substance of evil and are a prison, is, to the Zoroastrian, an unnatural viewpoint because the material world too is the handiwork of God, a tool he designed to conquer evil. Zaehner says "Zoroastrianism sees man not as an immortal soul imprisoned in a diabolical body but as a harmonious whole the unity of which is temporarily disrupted by death, but fully restored . . . at the final Resurrection."⁵³ Thel cannot find an answer to

IV.

The eternal gates terrific porter lifted the northern bar:
That entered in to saw the secrets of the land unknown:
She saw the councils of the dead, & when the flames' wroth
Of every heart on earth, rivers drop its restless' throats:
A land, of sorrows & of tears where none's soul was seen.

She wandered in the land of shades thru' valleys dark, list'n:
Doled out & lamentation: sitting by a dark grave
She stood in silence, list'n'g to the moans of the ground,
Till to her own grave plot she came, & there she sat down:
And heard this voice of sorrow breathed from the hollow pit.

Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction:
Or the Glaring Eye to the poison of a soul:
Why are Lyrids' stung with arrows rarely drawn,
Where a thousand nightingales in ambush lie:
Or an Eye of guile & guises, showing fruits & coiled
Of gold?

Why a Tongue impaled with honey in every word:
Why an Ear, a charmed hearer to love's evocation:
Why a lustful smile invading terror trembling & with
Of love.

The virgin started from her seat, & with a shriek
Flew back unharmed till she came into the arms of



the enigma of an imperfect world in the Christian tradition. But when creation is explained as a necessity in God's plan to protect goodness against an evil principle, the significance of Thel's failure is all the more apparent. As a result of selfish fear the world of innocence fails to grow into the world of experience. Thel's thoughts keep her from natural activity and her reason prevents her will or impulse. She becomes in actuality the "Cloven fiction" of the Lockean universe where the will and reason are opposite poles. Her fate is the mistake of trying to reduce the many-featured world of generation to the single, static state of Ulro.

Significantly it is not an illustration of Thel which concludes the poem but that of three tiny children riding a large serpent. The girl holds a delicate rein which offers scant protection against the beast, but all three little figures cheerfully accept their task. That Blake was interested in working out this enigma is apparent because he uses the same figures in *America*, in a water-colour and in the fourteenth illustration to *The Book of Job* (See Plate 63).⁵⁴ Besides the phallic connotations can we not find another comment in this illustration on the theme of innocence and experience, good and evil? The serpent, a symbol of evil in Zoroastrianism, and of evil matter to the alchemist, does exist in this world of experience, but the child, or innocence and goodness, has to give trustingly of itself in order to control Satanic or Ahrimanic forces and fulfil God's chosen design. Every item in creation has a function in the world, self-seeking is the true evil, for, both in Blake and in Zoroastrian ethics, one must accept that life entails sufferings which one overcomes for the sake of fulfilling one's role in the universal harmony. Zoroastrianism decries a philosophy that attaches value only to the next world deriding this existence. Earthly life has a deep significance, for to the Zoroastrian the ideal of human perfection is not asceticism but exertion. True virtue is not found by meditating in cloisters; self-development for Zoroaster lies in constant struggle, fighting one's way to victory is the

method of reaching the spiritual goal rather than self-preserving flight. This is the same issue implied in Thel's motto;

Does the Eagle know what is in the pit?

Or will thou go ask the Mole?

Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod?

Or love in a Golden bowl?

(*Thel T. K.*, 127)

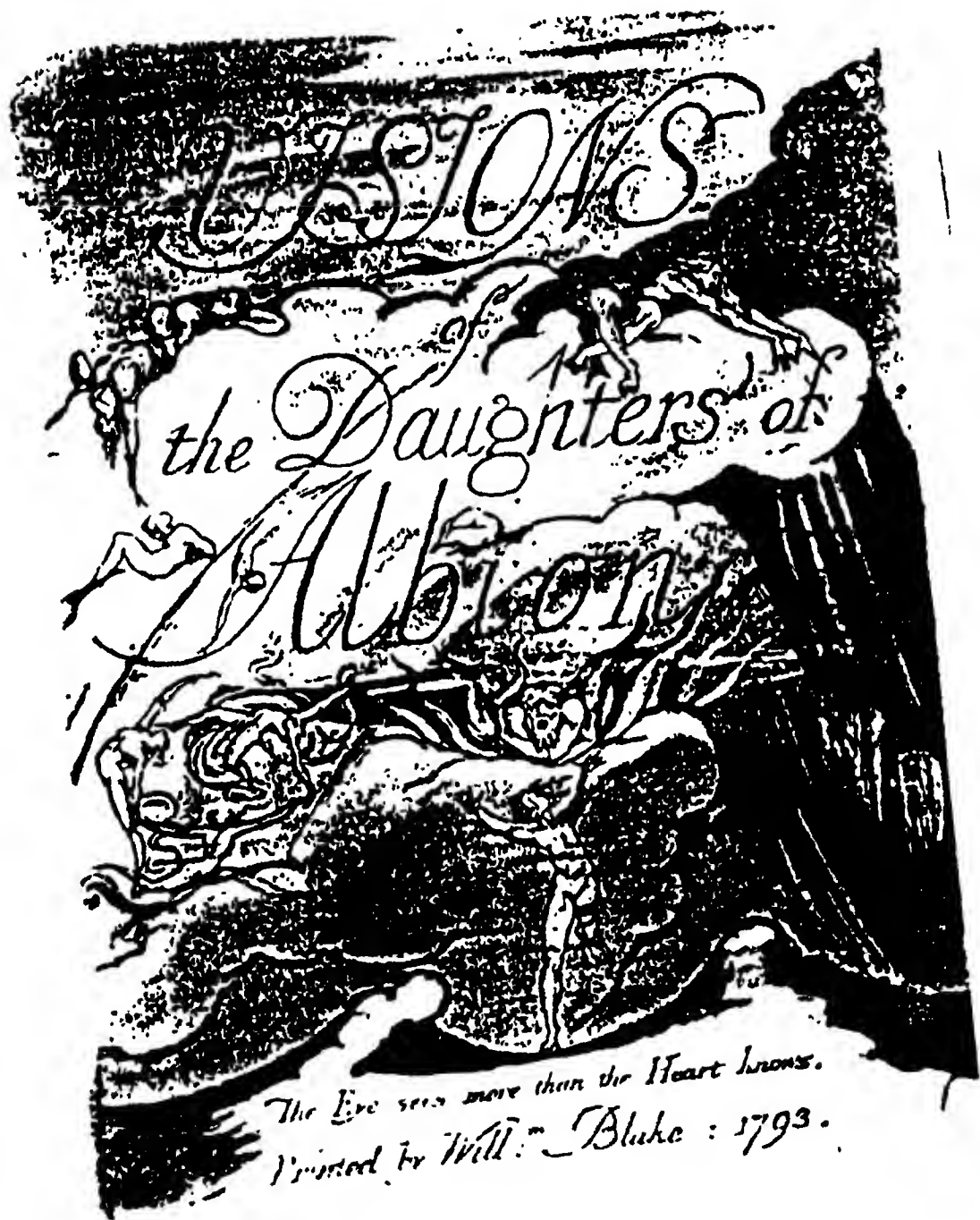
The Eagle, however far seeing, cannot have the mole's knowledge of its sphere. Only by participation, however painful, can value be discovered. Static self-preservation has kept Thel not innocent, but ignorant. If she had been willing to try she might have learnt that wisdom can be found in love, and love in wisdom. Blake was a visionary but to him the spiritual world was a continuous source of power, he is very far removed from "a mystical snail who retreated from the hard world of reality into the refuge of his own mind."⁵⁵

III

The Book of Thel is a tragedy of inaction and lack of will leading to frigidity, *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion* is the opposite, a commentary on the excess of feeling and emotion. If in *Thel* we see the failure of innocence to enter the state of experience, here too we see single vision, that of experience which fails to take into account any form of goodness or innocence. A single vision is by its very nature limited and the main characters, Theotormon and Oothoon, seem to represent a love that only too easily turns into jealousy and possessiveness. The frontispiece, (which in some copies is the



Pl. 64 *Visions of the Daughters of Albion.*



tailpiece), portrays in the paralysed positions of the characters the stasis that overcomes such a love, while on the title page, the woeful expression of the Fravashi-like Urizenic figure floating over the head of Oothoon, running with her arms outstretched, seems to reflect the pain that will overcome this mortal (See Plate 64-65).⁵⁶

Oothoon's story begins in joy "in exulting swift delight"(K., 189, 1.14), of love but the backward glance she gives at the sad fate which pursues her seems to warn us that her story will end in tragedy. The motto on the title page "The Eye sees more than the Heart knows," seems to suggest that love is not enough; the eye, symbolic of the light of the mind, or spiritual perception, in Blake's terms the Imagination, sees more than the heart which is the symbol of emotions, sense experience and the body. Imagination comprehends more than love, even the world of experience can be transcended by vision. The dualities of innocence and experience are only stages, full development passes beyond. The "Argument" however seems to be wholly positive. Sunrise, fecundity and joy radiate from the First plate where Oothoon, the opposite of Thel, dares pluck the Marygold, symbol of fertility,⁵⁷ "to glow between my breasts"(K., 189, 1.12). But by this action she condemns herself to the Hell that is the state of liberated womanhood in a limited world. Violated by Bromion who exults in her downfall, rejected by her true mate Theotormon, who mourns for her but will not accept her, most of the book is filled with Oothoon's lamentations and the wisdom she has learnt through suffering. The daughters of Albion, representatives of oppressed womankind, echo her sorrows. Oothoon, who delighted in love is defeated too by love, for Theotormon's jealous rage forbids him to accept that the loss of physical virginity does not defile the soul:

Arise, my Theotormon, I am pure
Because the night is gone that clos'd me in its deadly black.

(K., 191, 11.28-29)

For him there is only the morality of "one law for both the lion and the ox"(K., 192, 1.22) and a mournful dirge follows on the lot of woman, particularly the tragedy of women in a world which seeks only "hypocrite modesty"(K., 194, 1.16). Oothoon still searches for a love free of all restraint and concealment but Theotormon is lost in the world of shadows created by his own repressions and cannot hear her pleas. In the illustration Oothoon's fate is apparent in the manacle that chains her ankle down, preventing her from fulfilling her desires. The last plate again repeats the Fravashi motif, here it is significant to note that the Fravashis, besides being the guardians of creation, are also in that role seen as associated with fertility and the preservation of life in all its forms (See Plate 66).⁵⁸ So, while the characters look upwards, Oothoon's spirit depicted in the form of a Fravashi soars overhead in a cloud, suggesting that only in her eternal form will she be free of the chains of morality and custom which bind down freedom in the world of experience. S. Foster Damon in his interpretation feels that Theotormon stands for Desire, Bromion for Reason, and Oothoon's tragedy is that of the soul torn between Desire and Reason,⁵⁹ unable to find an answer in this world. For Blake, a society that saw lovers as antagonists, and declared a sexually experienced woman as fallen, was degraded because it was a society that regarded the beloved as a possession, utterly ruining the ideal of partnership and mutual dependence which for him was the meaning of a true relationship.

The error of the worlds of Thel and Oothoon is that of confusing the dualism of good and evil with that of the sense and spirit, reason and emotion. This is due to a limitation of vision, for man is a unity, he is was, and shall be, for, to quote Berdyaev,

Where the cold mirror spreads his gold, or does the bright stream
 On his shore shroud his eyes, or will he burl himself
 Expansion to the eye of day, or will he burl himself
 Friends the ox to the hard furrow, does not that mild beam blot
 The but the owl, the glumny oxer and the king of night.
 The sea soul takes the winter blast for a raving to her lairs:
 And the wild snake, the prevalence to adorn him with jewels & gold.
 And trees & birds & bushes, & men behold their eternal joy.
 Arise you little gleaming wings, and sing your wonted joy!
 Arise, and drink your bliss, for every thing that loves is holy!

Thus once morning walks Othoon but Thortormen sits
 Upon the margin ocean conversing with shadow's dore.

The Daughters of Albion hear her moans, & echo back her sighs.

The End



"The soul is not a product of generic process and is not created at the moment of conception, but is created by God in eternity, in the spiritual world."⁶⁰ The soul and the body are the inward and outward conditions of the same being, as Blake preached in his gospel of "Hell" in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. The body is the form of the soul, and reason as well as emotions and imagination, the guide. A mode of thinking in which the Earth itself is regarded as an outcast and the body seen as evil implicitly condemns the Creator who according to it, saw his own creation as evil.

The consequences of such negative thoughts are to be seen in *The Book of Ahania* where Urizen rejects his feminine eternal soul because to him, in her beauty, she represents physicality:

Deep groan'd Urizen! stretching his awful hand, Ahania (so name his
parted soul)
He seiz'd on his mountain of Jealousy.

(K., 249, 11:30-31)

To the single vision of Reason the generated soul is "Sin" and "clouds of disease" "arrows of pestilence," and "desolate darkness" follow this perversion of nature, while Ahania laments the lost happy time when she enjoyed Urizen's love and the world was a unity. Images of fecundity "babes of bliss," "bosoms of milk" "eternal seed" provide a deliberate contrast to emphasize the fruitfulness of the earth as the bride of Heaven. This, the harmony of a true marriage of heaven and earth, is what the Zoroastrian scriptures regard as bliss. "My mother is Spandarmat and my father is Ohrmazd"⁶¹ when all God's creation follows His great plan:

The wise Creator desires (only) what is good; his will is wholly good and his creative activity is in accordance with his will, and . . . can only achieve its full fruition by destroying . . . evil. Now the goodness of the wise Creator can be inferred from the act of creation and from the fact that he cherishes (his creatures) . . . and that he wards off the Adversary . . . A wise Creator does not regret or repent of what he has done, nor does he destroy his creatures.⁶²

In the Zoroastrian creation myth, the First Man is Gayomard who arises from Spandarmat, or Mother Earth; all human beings will proceed from his seed. Gayomard unites in his very name the concept of dualism as an earthly phenomenon. For his name, Gayo-maretan, literally unites Gaya-life and Maretan-death, and Signifies "mortal life," the state of all born, only to die, on this our earth. After Gayomard's destruction by Ahriman, Mashye and Mashyane, the first human couple are born from his seed which lay embedded in the earth. They arise in the form of a rhubarb plant, later to be separated and gradually assume a fully human shape.⁶³ In Blake's story Ahania the earth mother, too once delighted in "mother's joys" but is condemned to remain lost and lamenting, an outcast wandering "on the rocks with hard necessity"(K., 254. 1.72-73). Only much later in Blake's mythology, Urizen, realising his error, once again strives for unity. In *Vala* Ahania and Urizen are finally reunited, she dies of happiness and from her grave, which is the earth itself, arises "a wondrous harvest"(K., 372, 1.384).

IV

While in the later Prophetic Books, *Vala*, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, Blake would elaborate his myth of mankind in all the stages from dissolution and sleep to unity, in the earlier, shorter works just examined he was still groping for answers. That he was

constantly examining the duality of good and evil can be seen from his *Note Book* (also called *The Rossetti Ms*), which in its fifty-eight pages contains a wealth of genius. Scrawled on it very prominently is a title "Ideas of Good and Evil."⁶⁴ The clash of good and evil as seen in individual man was developed by Blake to be not the battle of body and soul but that of the Spectre and the Emanation. If the emanation is the visionary capacity in man, the spectre, its opposite, is the limited rational perception. While for the spectre death comes swiftly to all, the vision of the emanation gives comfort:

The oak dies as well as the Lettuce but its Eternal Image and Individuality never dies, but renews by its seed . . . , so the Imaginative Image returns by the seed of contemplative Thought.

(*V of L.J. K.*, 605)

The Spectre is the selfhood, the constricting limit beyond which man's self-centredness will not let him proceed. The emanation is the feminine form of all that a man loves and that which takes him outside and beyond himself, ultimately leading him to the Divine. Emanating from the imaginative aspect of man, the emanation corresponds to the concept of the Daena, the shining spiritual faculty, or religious conscience, who appears before the righteous in the shape of a maiden of unsurpassed beauty, the personification of the soul's good thoughts, words and deeds on earth. For the evildoer the personification of his conscience appears as an ugly old-woman, a spectre of its own deceit and dishonesty on earth.

Blake's most famous emanation is Jerusalem, the emanation of Albion, who becomes the representative of the inspiration or divinity in all mankind. Following his "golden string," Blake's later mythology, works its way to the ultimate union of Albion and Jerusalem, or all mankind with the divinity, the unity also promised by the Frashokereti or final renewal of the Zoroastrian world. The emanations, especially

Jerusalem, also come to represent true liberty, the freedom of the Divine Imagination. Similarly, the Daena is the ultimate personification of the free choice that each individual makes every moment of his mortal life. Daena's flower is "the hundred-petalled rose,"⁶⁵ which, as in the western tradition, is the symbol of perfect love and unity. The Daena, like the emanation is then "she who sees or recognizes (the truth)," as well as the maiden who is "a man's own action."⁶⁶

When Blake, in *The Notebook* and in the poems of what we call *The Pickering Ms*, explored his "Ideas of Good and Evil," the clash within man's personality, the duality of his spectre and emanation occupied much of the verse:

My spectre around me night and day
 Like a Wild beast guards my way.
 My Emanation far within
 Weeps incessantly for my sin.

(K., 415, 11.1-4)

The Emanation and the Daena are the forces which lead man away from his limited self towards unity with the divinity beyond, while the selfhood restricts and contracts. For Blake, the imaginative force which moves forward and outwards is Energy "the only life," while the spectre, or reason, binds man down. It is this duality of expansion and contradiction, of alternating cycles that we see in *The Mental Traveller*. This poem, in itself, articulates the despair Blake had expressed in a world where good and evil constantly battled for and within man. This was a time of questioning:

Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

(K., 214, 1.20)

a time before the answers became clear. The questions Blake raised, remained, as they would in any thoughtful mind, till the end, but the faith that Blake would find was yet to come. The later poems move in a linear fashion, a progression from error to apocalypse when all errors will be consumed and the world will appear perfected and complete. But in a world of doubt and uncertainty time itself becomes a meaningless repetition of events from which there is no escape. The cyclic movement here can be seen as the cycle of history, the swing of the pendulum in political and social revolutions, or as the cycle of physical growth and sexuality from infancy through puberty to growth, death and seed time, with the alternating ascendancy of the male and female principles. It can also be seen as the cycle of the body and the soul striving for dominance. In all these aspects it is an endless circle of thought, ratiocination upon the contraries that are present in the world of experience:

For there the Babe is born in joy
 That was begotten in dire woe;
 Just as we Reap in Joy the fruit
 Which we in bitter tears did sow.

(K., 424, 11.5-9)

The action and reaction continue endlessly, it is a perpetual circular movement, but while the circle normally represents perfection and unity, here it is a ceaseless battle for power. Even "the senses roll themselves in fear"(K., 426) or contract inwards while "The stars, sun, Moon, all shrink away." To break free is to move forward and outward, change the cyclic pattern for the linear, at the culmination of which stands the end of time and the perfection or re-creation of existence. In the cyclic world every principle has its opposite evil manifestation, but all this will be finally transcended in eternity which lies

beyond. The despair vanishes once the dualities can be seen as a part of God's design to cast out error and bring all creation to perfection.

In Zoroastrianism, unlike other Eastern beliefs, time is strictly linear. The cosmic year of *The Bundahishn* lasts for twelve thousand years. The battle between Ohrmazd and Ahriman is set in Time "And Ohrmazd said to the Destructive Spirit, 'Fix a time so that by this pact we may extend the battle for nine thousand years'" for "This too did Ohrmazd know in his omniscience, . . . that in the last battle the Destructive Spirit would be made powerless."⁶⁷

It is this confidence in the promise that the dualities of this world will cease, that good will triumph over evil and that the seemingly endless cycle of woes in this world of experience has a limit, fixed by the Creator himself, that provides the positive thrust of the Zoroastrian faith. In Blake's corpus the later Prophetic Books travel through the seemingly cyclic pattern and beyond it to a linear movement which tries to resolve the antithesis. This resolution too is based on faith:

Man was made for Joy and Woe;
And when this we rightly know
Thro' the world we safely go.
Joy & woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine;
Under every grief & pine
Runs a joy with silken twine.

(*Auguries of Innocence* K., 432, 11.56-62)

But before Blake could accept this very Zoroastrian philosophy, he still had to reconcile

other dualities. The mental levels of innocence and experience, good and evil became embodied in Blake's works and illuminations in the physical aspects of creation; heat and cold, light and dark, all of which takes us towards the greatest dualistic symbol, central to Blake and the Zoroastrian faith, which unites in itself all aspects of life--the symbol of Fire.

Notes

¹ Hegel, quoted in M.H. Abrams, *Natural Super-Naturalism*, p. 175.

² E.W. West, trans., *Sikand-Gumanik Vigar* in *SBE Vol. 24: Pahlavi Texts Part III: Dina-i-Mainog-I-Khirad, Sikand-Gumanik Vigar, Sad-dar* (1885; rpt. Delhi, Varanasi, Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), p. 153.

³ Illustrated plates of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* unless otherwise stated are from Sir Geoffrey Keynes, ed., *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell - reproduction in the Original Size of William Blake's Illuminated Book* (London, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, in association with the Trianon Press, Paris, 1975), see plate 15. Also Jean H. Hagstrum, *Poet and Painter*, p. 26.

Plate 48: Plate 15 of *MHH* with part of Stukeley's "Sacred heirogram" from Bryant Vol I, p. 488.

⁴ Duchesne-Guillemin, *The Hymns of Zarathustra*, p. 113. *Yasna* 31:11, line 3.

⁵ Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth Bollingen Series XCI:2*, (Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), p. 252.

⁶ E.W. West, trans., *Bundahis or the Original Creation* in *SBE Vol. 5: Pahlavi Texts Part I: The Bundahis - Bahman Yast and Shaysat-La-Shayast*, (1880; rpt. Delhi: Varanasi, Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), p. 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁸ Henry Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, trans. from French by Nancy Pearson (1971; rpt. Boulder & London: Shambala, 1978), p. 29.

Plate 49: *Marg* Vol XXIV no 4 Sept 1971, p. 44.

⁹ E.W. West, trans., *Sikand-Gumanik-Vigar*, SBE 24 *Pahlavi Texts III*, p. 153.

¹⁰ R.C. Zaehner, *The Teachings of the Magi: A Compendium of Zoroastrian Beliefs*, (London, New York: George Allen and Unwin & The Macmillan Co, 1956), pp. 60-61.

¹¹ Morton D. Paley, *Energy and the Imagination: A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 14-15.

¹² Mark Schorer, *William Blake: The Politics of Vision*, p. 48. *Plate 50* Keynes, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, pl. 3.

¹³ Crabb-Robinson reporting Blake's conversation regarding Genesis. In J.G. Davies, *The Theology of William Blake* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), p. 107.

¹⁴ *Sikand-Gumanik-Vigar*, Chapter VIII,1 & 23. E.W. West, trans., *S.B.E. Pahlavi Texts* Vol. 24, pp. 152, 153.

¹⁵ *Plate 51* Keynes, *Marriage* pl. 4. *Plate 52 & 53* "Good and Evil Angels" Tate Gallery, reproduced from David Bindman, with Deirdre Toomey, ed., *The Complete Graphic Works of William Blake: with 765 Illustrations* (1978; rpt. Thames & Hudson, 1986), Plate 328.

¹⁶ Keynes, ed., *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, reproduction in the Original Size, see commentary to plates 7-10 (no pagination).

¹⁷ Zaehner, *The Teachings of the Magi*, pp. 115, 114, 113, 103, 105.

¹⁸ *Zamyad Yast*, in James Darmesteter, trans., *The Zend Avesta Part II: The Sirozahs, Yasts and Nyayis*, S.B.E. Vol. 23 (1884; rpt. Delhi; Varanasi, Patna: Motilal Banarsi Dass, 1981), p. 291.

¹⁹ *Plates 54-55* Keynes, *Marriage*, pl. 11 & 14. Hagstrum, *Poet and Painter*, p. 43.

²⁰ *Plate 56* Keynes, ed., *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *Reproduction Plate 15*.

²¹ Bryant's *Mythology I*, p. 477.

²² S.N. Kanga quoted in Bode and Nanavutty, *Songs of Zarathushtra*, p. 31.

²³ J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *Gathas*, pp. 103 & 105.

²⁴ David Fuller gives an interesting insight into this aspect of reassuring comfort when, speaking of *Songs of Innocence*, he says:

It is easier, I suspect, to feel their emotional power if you have children

. . . and can understand what a radically different experience of life that commonly gives. The experience of love for somebody as precious to you as yourself; protective feelings. . . for somebody so loved, who is through a combination of qualities—trust, hope and unawareness—so vulnerable . . . The collection as a whole calls on the positive feelings and fears of such love very powerfully.

David Fuller, *Blakes Heroic Argument* (London: New York: Sydney: Croom Helm, 1988), p. 76.

²⁵ *Plate 57* Erdman, *Illuminated Blake* p. 71.

²⁶ Wolf Mankovitz, "The Songs of Experience" *Politics and Letters* (1947) rpt. in Margaret Bottrall, ed., William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1970), pp. 124-26.

²⁷ S. Foster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (New York: Peter Smith, 1947), p. 5.

²⁸ Sikand-Gumanik-Vigar, Ch. VIII, 100, in West, *SBE Pahlavi Text: -Vol. 24 Part III*, p. 159.

²⁹ *Bundahis*, West, ed., *SBE Pahlavi Text I: Vol. 5*, pp. 16-17-18.

³⁰ Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, pp. 228-29.

The symbol of the interpenetrating triangles is observed in many cultures and systems of thought. For the alchemists it signified the union of spirit and matter: "The two polar fundamental principles of the universe are *form* as the light principle, coming down from above, and *matter* as the dark principle, dwelling in the earth. A constant struggle goes on between these polar opposites: the material pyramid grows upward . . . the formal pyramid grows downward . . . exactly mirroring the material pyramid." See Désirée Hirst pp. 121-123.

For its use in our times, with reference to Yeats see Kathleen Raine "From Blake to A Vision," *New Yeats Papers XVII* (Dublin: The Dolmen Press), 1979, pp. 23, pl. 19 & p. 40, pl. 26.

³¹ *Bundahis*, West, ed., *SBE Pahlavi Text I: Vol. 5*, p. 21.

³² Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (1947) (Princeton:

(Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), p. 55.

³³ Jean H. Hagstrum, *William Blake Poet and Painter*, p. 79.

³⁴ See David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire A Poets Interpretation of the History of His Own Times* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1954), 3rd edn. 1977, p. 272. Erdman feels these lyrics of experience emerge from a particular moment of history, the time of anti-Jacobianism and Empire, but Blake's despair seems to extend beyond this to the general human condition.

³⁵ Raine, *Blake and Tradition* Vol. I, p.216.

³⁶ Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, p. 31.

³⁷ David Fuller, *Blake's Heroic Argument*, p. 79.

³⁸ Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, p. 237.

³⁹ See for a full discussion, Josephine Miles, "Blake's Frame of Language" in Paley and Phillips, *William Blake: Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes*, pp. 86-95.

⁴⁰ Henry Crabb-Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*. Selected & edited Thomas Sadler, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1869), Vol.II, pp. 307-10.

⁴¹ Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake*, p. 94 and Plate 52, p. 388.

⁴² Raine, *Blake and Tradition I*, p. 165.

⁴³ For universal applications of four-foldness see "The Square" from *Hermes*,

Vol. VI, Dec. 6, 1980, No:12. (Santa Barbara; California: Universal Theosophy Fellowship), pp. 546-56.

Dastur Framroze .A. Bode *Man, Soul, Immortality in Zoroastrianism* (Bombay: np 1960), Reprint of 4 lectures delivered as Govt. Research felllowsip Lecturer at the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute Jan-Feb. 1958, p. 34.

⁴⁴ S. Foster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*, p. 2. .Damon feels that Blake's stages of vision can be linked with the Five states of the mystic:

(1) The awakening, (2) The purgation of self, (3) An enhanced return to the divine order, (4) The Dark night of the Soul, and (5) Complete Union.

While J.G. Davies, *The Theology of William Blake* also finds a similar Four-foldness which moves from single vision through illumination and apprehension beyond reason to the complete union with God, pp. 67-71.

⁴⁵ *Datistan-i-Dinik XCIV:2* as trans. by Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, p. 40.

⁴⁶ Zaehner, *The Teachings of the Magi*, pp. 22 & 25.

⁴⁷ Morton Paley, *Energy and the Imagination*, p. 33.

⁴⁸ Mellor, *Blake's Human Form Divine*, pp.23/24. For Plate 60 see Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 34.

⁴⁹ Schorer, *The Politics of Vision*, p. 64

⁵⁰ *Plate 61* Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 36. *Plate 2*, and *Plate 62* *ibid*, p.39, *Plate 5*.

⁵¹ Taylor, quoted in George Mills Harper, *The Neoplatonism of William Blake*, p. 249. Also see S. Foster Damon *Symbols and Values*, p. 74, who quotes Socrates in *The Georgias* "And perhaps we are in reality dead, and that the body is our sepulchre." There has been speculation that Mrs. Blake suffered a miscarriage and stillbirth of a baby daughter for whom *The1* might be an elegy; while it can explain the sombre mood, Davis rejects this as being without evidence. See Michael Davis, *William Blake: A New Kind of Man* (London: Paul Elek, 1977), pp. 45-46.

⁵² Zaehner, *The Teachings of the Magi*, p. 21.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵⁴ *Plate 63*: Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 40, Pl. 6.

⁵⁵ Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, p. 29.

⁵⁶ *Plate 64-65*, Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, pp. 125 & 127.

⁵⁷ Elaine Kauvar notes that this Marygold, commonly called May-flower was used to protect fertility in the May-Day festivals. See Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 128.

⁵⁸ Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, p. 269. For *Plate 66* See Erdman *Illuminated Blake*, p. 136, pl. 8.

⁵⁹ S. Foster Damon, *Symbols and Values*, p. 329.

⁶⁰ Berdyaev, *Destiny of Man*, p. 79, quoted by Davies, *Theology of William Blake*, p. 128.

⁶¹ Zaehner, *Teachings of the Magi*, p. 21.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

⁶³ See *Bundahis*, West ed., *SBE Vol.15: Pahlavi Texts Part I*. Also see Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism Vol. I*, p. 97.

⁶⁴ Keynes, *Blake Studies*, p. 15.

⁶⁵ West, ed., *SBE Vol. 5, Pahlavi Text I*, p. 104.

⁶⁶ Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism I*, p. 238, 240.

⁶⁷ Zaehner, *Teachings of the Magi*, p. 37.

Chapter - IV

Flames of Growth

"O princes of fire, whose flames are for growth, not consuming"

(The French Revolution I. 179)

Fire is a universal symbol used in cultures across the earth. From the beginnings of civilization it has come to symbolize power. It has been used to portray the positive forces of nature by the Indo-Iranian family, being revered as Agni in India and Atar in the Iranian context. The nature of fire is dualistic, it possesses in itself a most potent destructive force as well as creativity. Fire can be seen as light-giving, illuminating, or as heat producing, burning and destructive. In Christianity, apart from the Pentecostal, the destructive aspect is often stressed with Satan and damnation linked to hell-fires and scorching heat. On the other hand, Eastern religions, particularly the Iranian religion, see this as part of the natural existence of fire, but their philosophy looks beyond this aspect to a totality of light and heat, positive as well as negative features, all building up to an element whose awesome power is incomparable. The very warmth of life found in all living beings is believed to be an aspect of the creative fire.

Zoroastrianism, from the earliest records, has always been regarded as the religion of fire. Henry Lord in 1630 describes visions of fire which came to "Dodo" (Dogdho, Zoroaster's mother) even before the birth of her child and declares, "they called him Zertoost, which importeth as much as a friend to the fire, because the sooth-sayer had prognosticated much good to him by the fire his mother beheld in the visions"¹ while Thomas Maurice, quoting Hyde, asserts that for the Persians, "the Throne of God was

seated in the Sun."² The reports of the early travellers exaggerate the Persian reverence for fire to the extent of saying that, "if their houses were on fire they would sooner be persuaded to pour on oyl to increase than water to assuage the flame,"³ but it is the philosophy behind this reverence which has to be examined for its links with Blake.

Blake's use of the fire symbol is close to the Zoroastrian concept of fire. Typically Satanic hell fires do appear in his texts and illuminations but his use of the fire symbol is complex. For Blake fire contains conflicting opposites and it becomes in his mythology the principle of freedom because it is the great agent of change. Orc's fires herald change and a new world where political and moral repression is destroyed while Los, the supreme creative figure, an anagram for 'Sol,' the Sun or fire principle, forges in his furnaces a new life and a better world.

For the Zoroastrian fire implies enlightenment, because it helps dispel the darkness of ignorance. Ahura Mazda Himself stands for radiant light, His very nature is enlightenment or wisdom, the highest grace a man can achieve. The radiance of the Sun and Fire both imply a healing warmth, the plenitude of health, life and fruitfulness and thus stand in direct opposition to the darkness and decrepitude of disease and decay. Fire also stands as the most sacred emblem of purity; as it gathers all within itself and makes clean, it serves as a visible symbol of righteousness or Asha, the code by which all humanity must strive to live. Righteousness or Asha is a theological concept concretely embodied by fire as a visible, glowing radiance which shows the actual presence of a cosmic life-animating principle of wisdom and health. Thus in the idea of fire we again see the uniting of the physical and the spiritual so important to Zoroastrian ethics. When a devotee offers homage before the visible fire, he is meditating upon righteousness, his spiritual goal. The material offering of incense and sandalwood does not imply fire

worship for it is only a means to awaken the abstract ideal.

In *Yasna 43* Zoroaster pays homage to the fire believing;

By the glow of thy Fire which is strengthened by the right, the strength
of the Good mind shall come to me.⁴

and when the Prophet despairs of carrying out his message he turns to fire as a
protector who will help further his cause:

Who, O Wise one, shall be sent
as a protector to such as I am
If the evil one seeks to do me harm?
Who but thy fire and thy mind, O Lord,
Whose acts shall bring Righteousness to maturity.⁵

The fire of Ahura Mazda also has its role to play in the work of the Last Judgment. At the time of the Frashokereti or Renewal of existence the righteous and unrighteous must pass the ordeal of molten metal when the Holy Spirit will finally judge each one's deeds. *Yasna 34*, which is a prayer before the sacred fire, declares that while Fire:

... may be a resplendent support
For him who exalts it; but for the enemy, O wise one,
According to the powers of thy hand, the clear showing of his
trespasses.⁶

The man who has lived according to the precepts of God will therefore be vindicated while divine judgment will be meted out through Fire to those who have trespassed.

Fire occupies a dominant role in Zoroastrian rituals and we see that various types of fire are described in the Zoroastrian texts in connection with the different roles they occupy.⁷ In all the discussions on fire we see that physical fire is transfigured and elevated to become the flaming fires of thought, working through the mind of man and helping him overcome his difficulties. Atar is also linked in *Yasna 47* with the Holy Spirit's task:

Through the fire thou shalt accomplish, supported by Devotion and Right
The apportioning of the good between the two parties.⁸

Fire becomes then the means of understanding the ultimate mystery of God, for like the Fire Vazishta--the physical fire of lightning--the devotee is asked to act swiftly and like lightning pierce the veil that hides God from man.⁹ In the *Atar Nyayis* (The Hymn to Fire) Atar "son of Ahura Mazda" is pictured by the devotee as a holy warrior, who bestows blessings and happiness on the man who sacrifices to him, "holding the sacred wood in his hand, the baresma in his hand." The blessings such a man will gain are:

Knowledge, sagacity; quickness of tongue; holiness of soul; a
good memory; and then the understanding that goes on growing and the
one that is not acquired through learning.¹⁰

We therefore see that in the Zoroastrian context fire is emblematic of universal order, it absorbs into itself all the contraries of existence and is creative, purifying and redemptive. The correspondences between material fire and its spiritual power are closer than those between other physical phenomena and their spiritual guardians, the consecrated fire becoming "a physical epiphany of the spiritual realm of Ohrmazd Himself."¹¹



Pl. 67 *The Covenant.* Water colour.

From the time of the Achaemenians, the tombs and carvings which the world associated with the Persians bore the symbol of fire, particularly the fire in the censer set upon a raised stand. However it is presumed that such fire-holders existed only within palaces, for there is no evidence of separate sacred buildings consecrated to fire in those times. Mary Boyce quotes Cicero who states positively that the early Persians despised fire-temples considering it wrong, "to keep shut up within walls the Gods whose dwelling place was this whole world."¹² The two great plinths at Pasargadea prove the tradition of worship under the open sky, while earlier tradition held that reverence to the fire should be paid in open air sanctuaries, in high places and close to the natural source of water. Archaeological evidence has found stone terraces built high in the mountains of Iran, the most famous excavation being that of Takht-i-Suleiman in Azarbaijan. Its situation beside a lake on a flat-topped hill is the perfect Zoroastrian holy site where fire and water could both be fitly venerated.¹³

Blake in a painting *The Covenant* seems to picture perfectly, such a location (See Plate 67). The painting depicts the Zoroastrian reverence of fire; even the pyramid of flame leaping skyward recalls the sculptures of fire altars seen and recorded by western travellers and antiquarians. In the Persian tradition fire has two qualities, which as Taraporewala says, symbolize two important spiritual aspects: it has the power of immediately transmuting everything it touches into a likeness of itself, and secondly the flames which always tend upwards are symbolic of the yearning for a higher state of existence. Fire and prayer in its presence guides man in his progress towards eternity.¹⁴ Blake's picture of reverence to the fire combines Christian elements--Noah's Ark resting on a hill top and the promised rainbow arching across the sky--with the primary Zoroastrian symbol of fire being worshipped by a figure so much like a Magian priest

that he even seems to have his mouth covered with the ritual cloth tied behind his head (See Plate 68).¹⁵ The picture is so Zoroastrian that the figure could almost be a depiction of *Yasna* LVIII:

And we offer hereby our thoughts, and words and actions . . . to the Bountiful Spirit. . . . Praise to Thee, O Fire of Ahura Mazda! Mayst thou come to us . . . for the help of the great effort, for joy-producing grace. Grant us both Weal and Deathlessness!¹⁶

For Blake fire belonged to the East and represented the creative spirit of love. Jesus was for him "The god of Fire and Lord of Love" (*Jerusalem K.*, p. 621) and he identified fire with the sources of creativity and inspiration. We have seen how in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, the "Devils" fire becomes a positive force converting the "Angel" to true wisdom and the same text echoes the Zoroastrian concept of fire at the final renewal of the earth:

The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true . . . The whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy, whereas it now appears finite and corrupt.

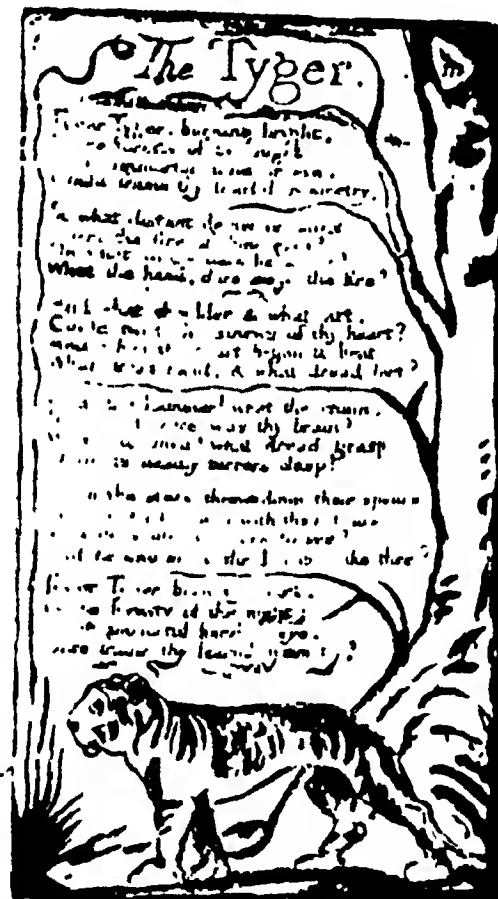
(*MHH K.*, 154)

In Blake and in Zoroastrianism then, spiritual fires consume errors and make clean, Los and Orc the fire spirits, like Atar, are vibrant and creative. But the dark black flames of *The Illustrations of The Book of Job* represent the tortures of the conventional Hell for they give heat without light. This dualistic aspect of Fire, the possibility of great creativity within great destructiveness, was to concern Blake in all his work and brings us



Pl. 68

Hyde. Close-up.



to Blake's most famous poem *The Tyger*.

I

Everyone knows *The Tyger* and many have tried to understand its enigmatic questioning. The illustration adds to the puzzle, for a poem that resounds with the power and energy of the tiger portrays the animal in the illumination almost like a tame, purring pussycat. That we are in the world of experience is seen from the barren leafless tree, but the starkness and menace of the illustrations to *The Poison Tree* or the corrosion visible in the plate *The Sick Rose* is missing. What is important to note is that unlike the blue colouring of most of the plates in the world of experience, there is a light pink sky behind the tiger while his body is shown (in different versions) as orange and dark or banded with red, blue, yellow and dark blue all combining into an almost rainbow like effect. In Chapter III, we have seen *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* as a part of an on-going process, or movement from unawareness to knowledge. The knowledge gained in Experience is painful and harsh, for it is difficult for the human mind to accept the dualities of existence just as it is bewildering and hurtful to find that the Father-figure who sheltered can also abandon. *The Tyger's* greatness lies in that it is a poem about the process of understanding and based on this it becomes a poem of reconciliation. It is also a poem about maturity; a childlike vision sees the world as black or white, with maturity comes the realisation of the complexity that makes up the fabric of creation.

Blake made several revisions of *The Tyger* and of the illustrations through which we see how the poet was disturbed by the concept of such a creature, for he found it difficult to reconcile its existence as harmonious with God's will (See Plate 69).¹⁷ This

is the same questioning we see in a poem from *The Notebook*:

Why art thou silent and invisible
 . . . Father of Jealousy?
 Why dost thou hide Thyself in clouds
 From every searching Eye?
 Why darkness & obscurity
 In all thy words & laws
 That none dare eat, the fruit but from
 The wily serpents' jaws?

(To Nobodaddy K., p.171)

The Notebook also contains the first two drafts of *The Tyger* from which emerges the final most positive draft. Interpretations as to the meaning of the poem vary from Michael Davis asserting that in *The Tyger* "Blake moves entirely into the visionary world,"¹⁸ to the socio-political reading of Stewart Crehan which states "*The Tyger* is a response to the terrible, new-born beauty of violent revolution."¹⁹ Blake's ability to combine two such diverse issues into one poem is not to be doubted; in this poem he moves to the question of the source of good and evil, the dualities which so absorbed his creative mind, an issue which includes in itself a wide range of problems.

Two early critics had noticed the Eastern influences in the poem. Gilchrist speaks of its "strange old Hebrew-like grandeur, its oriental latitude, yet force of eloquence," while for Malkin "Our bard, having brought the topic he descants on from warmer latitudes than his own, is justified in adopting an imagery, of almost oriental feature and complexion."²⁰ If *The Tyger* is a poem which sees the possibility of reconciling oneself to the existence of the dualities, the fact that the tiger of the illustration is deliberately

unrealistically portrayed tells us that Blake is going beyond the physical animal and its peculiar uniting of beauty and cruel bestiality to raise issues beyond. Historical interpretations of the poem nevertheless also come back to the problem of evil arising from seemingly positive events, such as the French Revolution. The thirteen rhetorical questions of *The Tyger* cannot be contained in any one interpretation for they are the unanswered issues of all religions and philosophies--Blake like others before him was only attempting to find answers.

The first rhymes of the poem stress the dualism inherent in The Tyger "bright" and "night," contradictions in themselves symbolize here an active uniting of opposites. Stewart Crehan's argument on the paradox is impressive:

We have hinted that the question: Who made the Tyger? presumes a single, undivided Author of Creation, whereas what we see is a dialectical process arising from the birth of contraries . . . In the Beginning, darkness gave rise to its opposite (light) which, intensifying into a burning brightness in response to the darkness, has led in turn to a further intensification of the darkness. There is in this (as well as in the flame-like stripes of the tiger) a fearful symmetry that is at once recognisable: the fearful symmetry of conflict.

Crehan's theory of *The Tyger* though based on socio-political and historical considerations, still raises the question of dualities to conclude that;

The creation of the Tyger has thus shattered, not only the idea of a merciful loving god, but the very notion of a single, undivided Creator from whom all things flow.²¹

Spiritual doubt and division leads to the birth of Ahriman The Evil one, in the Zurvan myth of Zoroastrianism just as it engenders wrath in Blake. To Blake, God was

essentially personal, but to regard the Lamb as God's Love and the Tyger as his wrath is to oversimplify the issue. Just as fire contains dualities within itself, so too the Creator has the capacity to absorb all paradoxes. *The Tyger* deals with Evil created by a good God. Blake is raising a very real question, the answer to which he was not certain of when he wonders:

Did he smile his work to see?

Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

(K., p. 214)

The western tradition could not provide him with a direction for it has never been able to reconcile itself to a loving Father figure afflicting mankind with dreadful evil and pain. But a tradition in which evil is a part of the process of the world and its separate existence is accepted as part of the Divine Plan is closer to Blake's idea for he realised that "the roaring of Lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man" (MHH K., 151).

If the Forest is in Blake's world of experience, the classical symbol of that which contains error in the form of dead trees, dimming the light and concealing the path, then the task of the Tyger 'burning bright' is to use his fiery power to consume Error. In the dark forest of experience an equally powerful force is needed to overcome obstructions and so the fire of the Tyger becomes not just a symbol of wrath but also a symbol of cleansing. Zoroastrianism has shown that destruction is inevitable if renewal is to come about and only God's cleansing fires can destroy the errors and hypocrisies of the world of experience, just as paradoxically it is only through the fearful destructiveness of the tyger that the world of higher harmony can be attained.

Fire shapes the tyger, The lyric delineates the actual process of his creation where

firstly the "fire of his eyes" is gathered from the cosmos followed by the shaping of his heart in the furnaces, the forging of his feet and ultimately his brain. Blake was also making use of a figurative concept familiar to him from the writings of the Prophets, the allusion being to the wrath of the Lord burning through the forests of a corrupt social order.²² To this he added the doctrine of contraries, the unending dialectic of this world which can only reach synthesis in godhead. Images of fire add to the interaction of the dualities where fire represents both the light of God's wisdom and the heat of His wrath. Besides the plate of *The Lāocoön* group Blake gave pictorial expression to these two Principles in an illustration of James Hervey's *Meditation Among the Tombs* where in one corner of the painting to the left of God the Father, Blake wrote 'Wrath,' and in the other corner 'Mercy' and the words "God out of Christ is a consuming Fire."²³

While the image of the stars has been seen as symbolic of the old monarchic order, Blake in *The Tyger* also sees stars as symbols of oppression associated not merely with Newton's universe but also with blind fate.²⁴ The defeat of the stars signifies then a freedom from constraints an opportunity given to man to use this freedom from error to realise his own potential. The image of the cold light of the stars is deliberately juxtaposed against the burning glow of fire, just as in their silence they stand in contrast to the sounds of the furnaces, "the hammer," "the chain," and the anvil," all aspects of the sounds of metal being worked.

In Blake's prophetic writings these tools belong to Los, Eternal Prophet, symbol of the Imagination and true Creator who uses his fiery furnaces to forge a new world. Traditional Christian symbolism linked furnaces with wrath, purification and the judgement of God. In the *Old Testament*, for Ezekiel, the furnace is a simile of the anger of God:

As they gather silver and brass and iron . . . in the midst of the furnaces,
to blow the fire upon it . . . so will I gather you in mine anger and in my
fury.

(Ezekiel 22:20)

While for Isaiah they stand for "the furnaces of affliction"(48:10). It is significant that Blake who greatly respected these two prophets uses the furnaces as a means of creation. Blake, rejecting the traditional symbolism of anger and retribution, makes fire and furnaces a part of the energies of creativity. Mellor sees this energy as a development from the innocence of the Lamb. According to her reading, the tyger is pictured as a peaceful brightly coloured beast, because although its energy can be channelled into awe-inspiring fear here it fuses the gentleness of the lamb with the quiet power of energy at rest. When the false dissections of the world are removed the tyger and lamb will lie down together.²⁵

Therefore Blake's questions in *The Tyger* allow his readers to respond according to their own mentality. If the Tyger is as much part of Creation as the Lamb then the reader has accepted that innocence and experience, good and evil are part of an all-pervasive plan. The reader who cannot accept the dualities will be limited to a system of thought which cannot explain evil. There are no simplistic answers but the ability to accept the fact is to be able to face life, good and evil, squarely. In *The Tyger* Blake was using his symbolism in an attempt to come to an understanding of the dualities. In his final prophetic work, *Jerusalem*, he had reached true meaning for there all things are created in Los's furnaces, including 'The Tyger' and 'the woolly lamb,' 'the bear,' and 'the downy fowl' (*Jerusalem*, pl. 73, K., p. 713). The vision Blake achieves at the end is very close to the all encompassing vision of Zoroastrianism.

II

Blake's use of fire in *The Tyger* is experimental, fire is powerful, cleansing, yet its destructive potential is terrifying. As he developed his ideas fire came to occupy a very important positive position in his myths. A glance at any Concordance of the Bible will show that the stress on the symbol of fire in the Christian tradition is mainly on the retributory aspect of the element. Besides the Old Testament examples we have seen where fire is the Biblical metaphor for describing the power, intensity and thoroughness of divine judgement, Jesus describes the destiny of the wicked as a place of unquenchable fires (Mark 9:43) and 2 Peter (3:10-12) prophesises destruction of the earth by fire. In Christianity then fire is an awesome power but the stress is on its tremendous destructive potential; it has cleansing powers but its healing and sanctifying side are practically unknown to the tradition in which Blake was born. While the Gnostic and Alchemical traditions gave Blake insight into other aspects of fire Zoroastrianism would show him its positive role.²⁶

In the Blakean world, Orc and Los are the two figures closely linked with flames and fire while Urizen stands at the opposite extreme in a cold dark world of frozen emotions. The hero of Energy in the Lambeth books is Orc, Blake's symbol of Revolution and anger against oppression. First-born of Enitharmon and Los (*Europe K.*, 239), his story is closely linked with an analysis of the contemporary political situation in the American and French revolutions. The relationship between Urizen and Orc is that of conflict, the conflict between convention and revolt, while Orc's initial appearance is as "a Human fire" (*America K.*, 197), and his words a promise of the wonders of revolutionary freedom:

The morning comes, the night decays, the watchmen leave their stations;

. . . Let the slave grinding at the mill run out into the field
 Let him look up into the heavens and laugh in the bright air;
 Let the chained soul, shut up in darkness and in sighing,
 Whose face has never seen a smile in thirty weary years,
 Rise and look out; his chains are loose, his dungeon doors are open;

(*America* 6:11.1-10, *K.*, 198)

In the Lambeth books, various aspects of Orc appear. Besides being the revolutionary, he is the divine child, fire, demon, serpent; the imagery used to describe him both in the texts and the illustrations ranges from the sublime to the terrible. But Orc's promises are not fulfilled, and in *The Four Zoas* and *The Book of Urizen* we see the conflict between the jealous father, Los, and his son leading to the binding down of the child. Orc's imagination however remains free and permeates everything:

All things heard the voice of the child
 And began to awake to life

(*Urizen* 20:11.28-29, *K.*, 233)

The flames of Orc, though revolutionary, are nevertheless the flames of destruction and even when he is called upon:

Arise, O Orc, from thy deep den!
 And we will crown thy head with garlands of the ruddy wine.

(*Europe* 4.11.10-13, *K.*, 239)

the revolutionary idea itself becomes corrupted and what we see is a very pessimistic view of Energy bound into the cycle of recurrence. The flames of Energy change to a serpent body and in *The Four Zoas* he loses all trace of his human form ultimately burning himself out. The Orc figure thus shows the "paradoxical potentiality of either



5

Fire

Pl. 70

"Fire."



Pl. 71 "Albion Rose."

redeeming human energy or betraying it to the cycle of history,"²⁷ and Orc's fires fail because they have only a negative purpose. Though they are flames of revolution they are flames of destruction and hence self-limiting. Orc's flames are therefore only a stage, a temporary answer, for political revolution in the world degenerates as did the American and French Revolutions till in its own destructiveness it loses all its original meaning. The real solution is to re-create, to forge anew, and this is the task that will be given to Los.

Orc's failure is however not the failure of the element of fire, as we see from two important plates. An Orc-like figure entitled *Fire*, armed for battle stands triumphant in the midst of flames in *For Children: The Gates of Paradise*, emphasizing that fiery element in man which, for Blake, enabled rebellion against both mental and material prisons. This figure was to become the focus of his famous *Glad Day* or *Albion Rose* figure, the youth with his open arms and widespread legs who radiates innocence and energy as dancing the death of the old order, he throws off his cocoon and emerges as true liberty. This is the true symbol of Fire which Blake sought to illustrate (See Plates 70-71).²⁸ It is not the Orc-like fire that still needed spear and shield but spiritual strength triumphing in the vibrant form of Fire. Thus even the illustrations move away from the revolutionary aspect of fire to its creative powers and the naked youth, emblem of energy, culminates in the figure of Los, the poetic imagination incarnate, who appears as an open-armed figure in flames. He stands holding not the sword of destruction, but the hammer and tools of creativity forged in the fire of his furnaces.

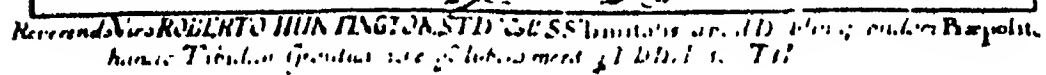
In the *Avesta*, *Yasna XXXVI*, the fire and the Sun are called the visible symbols

of Ahura Mazda "the most bounteous one of His Spirit," and "The most potent of all names for grace." The material fire is approached reverently "To thy most beauteous body do we make our deep acknowledgement, O Ahura Mazda! . . . and to that one the highest of the high, such as the sun was called."²⁹ Los-Sol, becomes an illustration of this statement, for he embodies Blake's highest aspect of the mind--poetry. Maurice, the antiquarian had stated that the Persians had two ways of representing the sun in sculpture and painting, the one under the form of a young man, and the other "in the similitude of a human face radiated"(See Plate 72).³⁰ The young man can be related to Mithra, who presides over light, especially that which radiates from the sun and reflects its radiance. Seen as the harbinger of light and herald of the dawn, Mithra is a guardian figure who watches over the doings of men surveying and seeing all. Because of his association with the sun he is also linked with the warmth and life in plants and all living creatures. Morally Mithra stands for truth, just as light dispels darkness and evil, Mithra crusades against the lie; warring with the evil one. Because of this role he became the keeper of oaths and promises. Los seems to have a role similar to Mithra's and in a verse letter to Thomas Butts on the 22nd of November 1802 Blake made the link between Los and the Sun explicit:

Then Los appear'd in all his power:
 In the Sun he appear'd, descending before
 My face in fierce flames; in my double sight
 'Twas outward a sun: inward Los in his might.

(K., 818, 11.55-58)

Although the Los figure appears almost throughout the minor and major prophecies, in *Jerusalem* Los stands for Urthona (J plate 39). Urthona is the Zoa who



Pl. 72 The Sun as "A human face radiated." Plate from *Hyde*.

exists at the centre and heart of each individual. Los, therefore reflecting Urthona's role, stands for association with the earth. Like the traditional earth mother he becomes an archetype of all creativity. While his work with fire as a blacksmith links him with tools of forging and physical creation, mentally as a poet he reflects imaginative power shaping a new creation with strength of will as well as labour. Los's task is to use his fiery energy to shape order out of chaos and to reintegrate the divided self. He is also the great champion of Man, whom, Jesus-like, he comes to redeem. Through his poetry too, he acquires the role of a Prophet come to teach man the truth in order to prepare him for a New Age. In Los, the "hammer" and the "chain" of the Tyger, the burning fires of Orc are all transformed to become tools of the good creation for:

The blow of his Hammer is Justice, the swing of his Hammer Mercy.

The Force of Los's Hammer is eternal Forgiveness.

(J.88.11.49-50, K., 734)

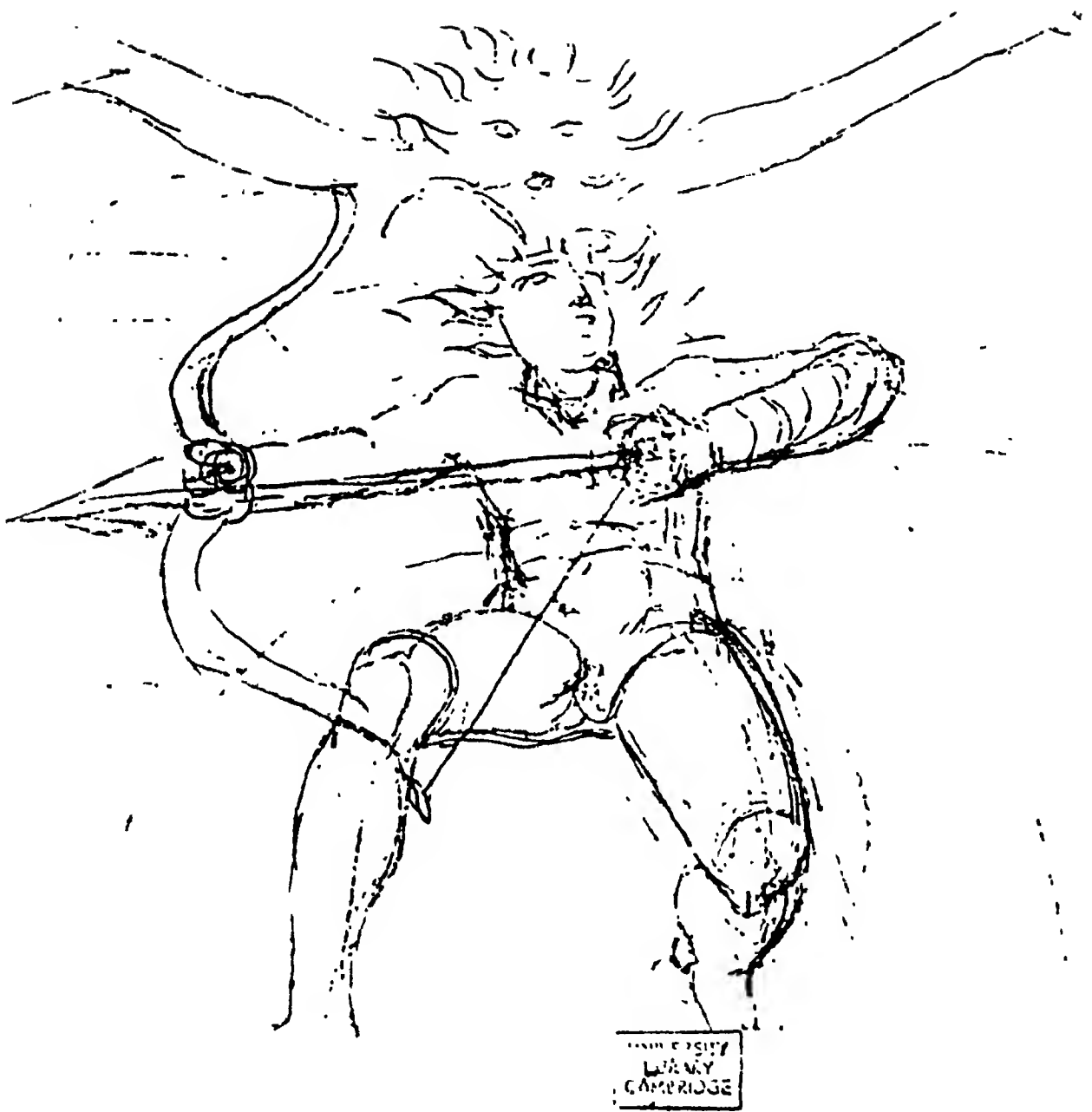
His creativity includes the building of Golgonooza the city of art as well as Jerusalem, the ultimate of liberty and hope for all mankind. For Los, the human body and its impulses are all holy, and just as Ahura Mazda fashions the world to aid in overcoming evil, so too Los will give "a body to Falsehood that it may be cast off forever" (J.12, 1.13, K., 631). In the revolutionary years, Los the blacksmith uses as his material the people's Anger; later in the great prophecies it is their suffering, the sighs and tears, and bitter groans that he fuses "to form the spiritual sword" (J 9, 11.17-18, K., 628), with which he will serve the needs of Man. The most heroic aspect of Los is that he is an individual who denies the self in order to help his fellow beings. In this he becomes the archetypal saviour sacrificing himself for his flock, while, as the prototype of the revolutionary poet, his task is to overcome mental restraint and release his people from narrow perceptions. An interesting pencil drawing entitled "The Bowman," represents a Los-like figure, a

powerful young bowman with flaming hair, about to shoot his arrows of perception, and looking back to his spiritual inspiration--a fravashi-like figure whose flames reflect those of his earthly prototype (See Plate 73).³¹

It is in keeping with Blake's philosophy that he unites two apparently contradictory professions in the creation of Los. The traditional blacksmith is a burly, tough individual working with heavy metals in his forge. Blake, using this figure, makes him poetic, artistic, and a representative of all that is fine and sensitive in the human psyche. Blake is here again marrying apparent opposites, to prove his theory of a unity of being necessary for bringing about perfection in this world. Just as fire unites and absorbs contradictions in itself, so does Los, the fire-worker.

The Song of Los is Blake's story of recorded history. The Books named after the continents of Africa and Asia, describe the degeneration and enslavement of man leading up to the revolutions of *America* and *Europe*. All the material used here was to become, with many revisions, the great epic *The Four Zoas*. In his Lambeth books, as even later, Blake tries to combine the history of human development with the development of the individual soul. For Blake these are not two separate issues, for each individual repeats in his life the history of creation. The title page of the poem indicates the decay that has set in on the earth, for while Nature is present in the mixture of ocean waves, hills, valleys, green grass and brown soil, the Urizenic figure present is decaying and dissolving into the ground, and his hand rests on a skull (see plate 74).³²

Africa is a survey of mankind under a Urizenic code of hypocrisy:



Pl. 73 "The Bowman."



Pl. 74

Titlepage. *The Song of Los.*

powerful young bowman with flaming hair, about to shoot his arrows of perception, and looking back to his spiritual inspiration--a fravashi-like figure whose flames reflect those of his earthly prototype (See Plate 73).³¹

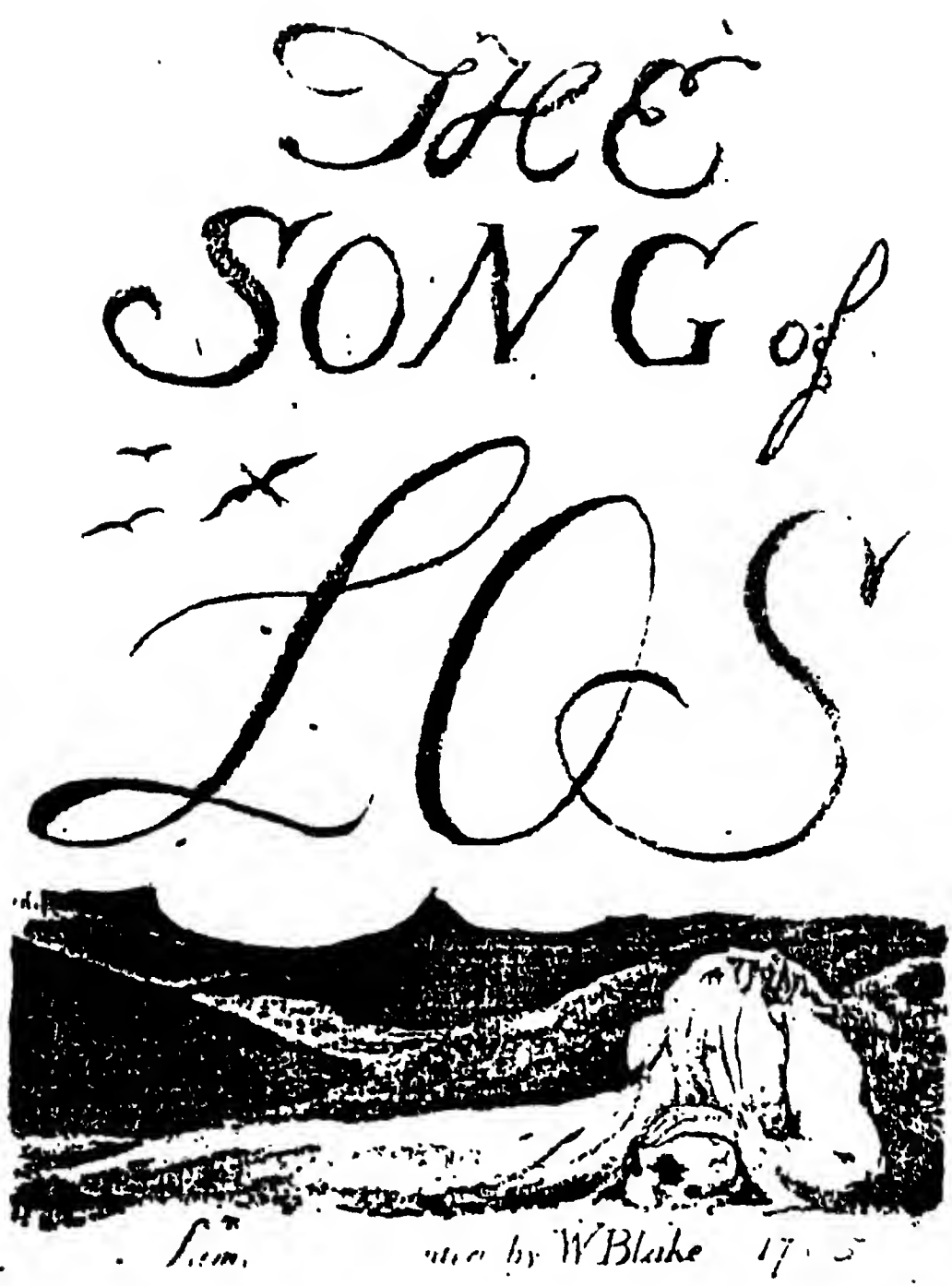
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Africa is a survey of mankind under a Urizenic code of hypocrisy:



Pl. 73 "The Bowman."





Pl. 75 "Oberon and Titania."

The human race began to wither, for the healthy built
 Secluded palaces, fearing the joys of Love
 And the diseased only propagated.

(SL 3, 11:25-27 K., 246)

The decay of humanity is emphasized by the illustration where a snake, a lizard and insects crawl over the page while a man lies asleep with his face buried in his arms, while in Plate 4, Har and Heva flee the "War and lust" of this world their expressions distressed and Heva's hand outstretched as if trying to hold back the encroaching corruption. A batlike human form overhead brings no spiritual sustenance, only fear. This is a world where "Churches, Hospitals, Castles, Palaces," become "nets and gins and traps to catch the joys of Eternity"(S 4.11.1-2 K., 246). Plate 5 consists of an illustration without any text, a picture from fairy-land where a crowned fairy king sits besides his sleeping queen watching humanity from a world of stars and lilies. Identified as "Oberon and Titania,"(see plate 75)³³ these tiny figures suggest a world of beauty and peace possible at the heart of nature. This plate, coming between *Africa* and *Asia* is a promise of hope, to be held on to, even though the present moment is bleak.

The title page of *Asia* reveals a storm tossed world, clouds loom overhead while human figures seem to be flung about by angry waves and forests of branches and roots bend with the force of the gale. Beheaded figures signal the revolution that the Kings of *Asia* have heard, for the age old "darkness" of *Asia* has been challenged by:

The thick-flaming, thought-creating fires of Orc:

(SL Pl.6.15 K., 247)

The oppression of kings and priests has tried "to restrain, to dismay, to thin"(6.11. K., 247) the inhabitants of this continent, to use force to teach man imposed obedience. The

most pernicious part of the oppression is that it limits man's aspiration, humanity is reduced to "mortal worms" crawling helplessly on:

The path
That leads from the gates of the Grave.

(11.7-8)

Orc's fires however are not to be denied, he rises "like a pillar of fire" and brings regeneration to "the sullen Earth." Plate 7 the plate of this regeneration, portrays a stillness after the earlier storm. Green leaves hover protectively around the text in both margins and in an apocalyptic final stanza the grave is transformed into a "womb" while images of fertility fill the earth. "Urizen wept" are the last words. His contribution is echoed by the compassion with which Los, the poet-blacksmith surveys the completed song he has fashioned. While the Sun in the frontispiece was corrupted and appeared diseased, the Sun above which Los rests while holding his steel hammer is now a healthy red, and although clouds still appear they radiate spires of light which look very like flames. Los, having used his fiery element successfully can now be at ease.

While *The Song of Los* deals with human history, *The Book of Los* is about eternity. Both *The Book of Urizen* and *The Book of Los* tell the story of man's fall, but while *The Book of Urizen* has powerful plates, *The Book of Los* has the least and perhaps most weakly decorated plates of all Blake's writings. The first plate shows Eno, the Earth Mother--Enion, crouched arms and legs drawn together, lamenting, while a similarly crouched and self-enclosed figure sits, back to the reader, on the title-page, his

introspection emphasised by the illustration which shows him almost totally enclosed and bound down by rocks. Enion laments lost innocence:

O Times remote!
When Love and Joy were adoration
And none impure were deem'd.

(*BL* 3:1.7-9, *K.*, 256)

But although the illustration above Chapter I shows Urizen also in a hunched position, crouching enmeshed in a net of restraint, the youth and maiden at the bottom of the net, are not ensnared but free from its binding force. Blake now brings about a confrontation between two cultural ideas of fire. The "Living flames . . . arm'd with destruction and plagues," of the western tradition are opposed by the creative flames of Los. Los, bound by chains, and "compell'd to watch Urizen's shadow"(1.32) stands in the midst of destructive hell-fires which give no light, and uses his power to combat fire with fire. It is unfortunate that Blake gives us no visual image to illustrate this very powerful idea, for as Los's creative fires grow, the destructive flames die out, freezing around him into petrified rock:

. . . But no light from the fires! all was Darkness round Los:
. . . Coldness, darkness obstruction, a Solid,
Without fluctuation, hard as adamant
Black as marble of Egypt, impenetrable
Bound in the fierce, raging Immortal;
And the separated fires froze in:
A vast solid rock without fluctuation
Bound in his expanding clear senses.

(*BL* 3 & 4, 11;43-49, & 1-10, *K.*, 257)

Los's fall is halted by the element of fire, the light of hope and regeneration comes "from the fires" and Los begins on his labours. The furnace built, he forms "an Anvil, A Hammer of Adamant" and sets about his task of binding Urizen. Only through his creative fires can he triumph, and he labours on

till glorious

An immense Orb of fire he fram'd.

(BL 11.34-35 K., 260)

At the conclusion, Urizen is made powerless and Los, with outstretched protective arms forms a Fravashi-like guardian-angel figure over a rising sun, which breaking through the clouds implies a better future (See plate 76).³⁴

In Zoroastrianism, as we have seen, Truth is associated with the element of Fire, and Khshthra Vairya, the archangel guardian of metals has an important role to perform at the end of time when after the ordeal of molten metal the perfect kingdom will come into existence. Metals are, therefore, regarded as the earthly counterpart of the coming perfection.³⁵ Los uniting both concepts of Truth and working with metals and fire, creates a new order. Los's furnaces are the tests of humanity, the suffering which man has to endure as a part of the process of experience, and while several of Blake's characters are linked with furnaces, the furnaces of Los are the most important. Described in detail in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, in the seven furnaces we see a representation of the poetic process itself; the casting of new forms, the discarding of the old; creating through mental labour the spiritual sword, Justice, forgiveness and love, a

world that culminates in the perfection of holiness--Jerusalem.

In keeping with his role, Los represents youth and hope springing up, health, strength and beauty. In all this he is constantly opposed to the wintry world of Urizen, who becomes the embodiment of old age, restraint and decay. In opposing these two contraries, one against the other, Blake makes Urizen the stony Old Testament patriarch and Los the redeeming Christ. But while Los occupies the role of Christ as destroyer of evil and redeemer of mankind, he is also the symbol of love; not only the pure divine love which Jesus embodied, but sexual creative love. Enitharmon his emanation and the mother of Orc is also the creator of Beulah, Blake's representation of the love of the sexes, a world to him in its true form of sweet joys and energy. Los also becomes the example of the open intuitive seeking mind and his depiction as a youthful male nude, often with widespread arms and feet, stands in deliberate contrast with Urizen, old, fully-robed, a huddled or crouching figure, representing the closed mind and heart. Los in contrast to Urizen becomes feeling as opposed to cold reason, Wisdom opposed to mere intellect and truth as opposed to just facts. The naked Los, like the nude Albion, is the affirmation of physical beauty as a revelation of the divine spirit, an image that proves the two are not antithetical for Innocence can dwell with passion and energy. Los, open-armed standing in flames, with the tasks of artistic creation before him becomes Blake's visual message of Energy symbolic of physical and mental liberation and unites in himself the open mind and the fulfilled body.

The Zoroastrian fires too combine life-creating warmth and mind-enriching enlightenment. Similarly, the creation of Los combines energy or desire with vision or

the imagination. As the builder of the eternal form of human civilization Los works with metal and fire, the two great instruments which have made civilization possible. His chief association is with iron and the period in which he works, the period which began with Adam, is in Blake's mythology seen as the Iron age.³⁶ Blake's vision of human history, from the Golden Age, through the Silver, Bronze and Iron, covers an area very similar to that described in the *Bahman Yast* as "a tree, on which were four branches, one golden, one of silver, one of steel, and one was mixed up with iron." Ahura Mazda tells Zoroaster that these are "the four periods which will come"³⁷ and as we see in Blake, it is in the Iron Age that the worst evils befall before the renewal of the earth.

One final aspect of Los which might explain Blake's close identification with his creation is that Blake's own process of engraving was an art employing Los's tools of metal and fire; in this Los becomes the poet's own representative, both Los and Blake being poets and prophets.

III

If Los is Blake's alter-ego and hero, Urizen is the representative of all that Blake stood against. Symbol of Reason, he becomes the restrainer of desire and energy, the maker of a rigid soul-destroying law and the killer of impulse. Seen by Hagstrum as related to the classical Neptune, his name can be a pun on "Your Reason" and has also been seen to derive from the Greek "to bound" or "to limit," the root of the English "horizon."³⁸ Like any horizon his name implies an imposed limit and through him Blake suggests that reason is that which sets bounds for mankind, those bounds which the imagination must break to live a creative life. As one of the Four Zoas Urizen seems to represent not the Trinity reflected in the other three

(Tharmas the Father, Luvah, the Sun, and Urthona, the Holy Spirit), as much as the fallen angel. As Blake developed his ideas, in *The Four Zoas* he made Urizen the first born Son of light and in *Jerusalem* he is seen initially as a radiant youth, but once doubt and pride overwhelm him he degenerates. The story of his fall belongs to the great Prophecies and will be discussed in the next chapter, but initially Urizen's role is that of an angry, jealous, Old Testament deity, the architect of materialism and science, opposer of freedom and love. When he first appears in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he is "the jealous king" (25-27 K., p. 159) who with his "grey brow'd counsellors . . .," "promulgates his ten commands." Oothoon in the *Vision of the Daughters of Albion* is the first to name him, only to denounce him as responsible for her slavery. While Los's tools are associated with the furnaces, Urizen his opposite extreme, uses weapons which are always forms of water; cold, ice, rain, snow, clouds and tears, and at the end of *America* he pours out these weapons. He is never named in *The Songs of Experience* but his presence is always felt in the denouncement of all life and hope and it is his picture we see entangled in the net at the bottom of "The Human Abstract."

From the point of view of Zoroastrianism Urizen is interesting because just as Blake, echoing ancient Zoroastrian beliefs, uses fire as the great creative force, his portrayal of the Urizenic hell is strikingly similar to Zoroastrianism:

Regarding the cold, dry, stony and dark interior of mysterious hell it says, that the darkness is fit to grasp with the hand, and the stench is fit to cut with a knife.

While another text the *Arda-Viraf-Namah* stresses the psychological aspect:

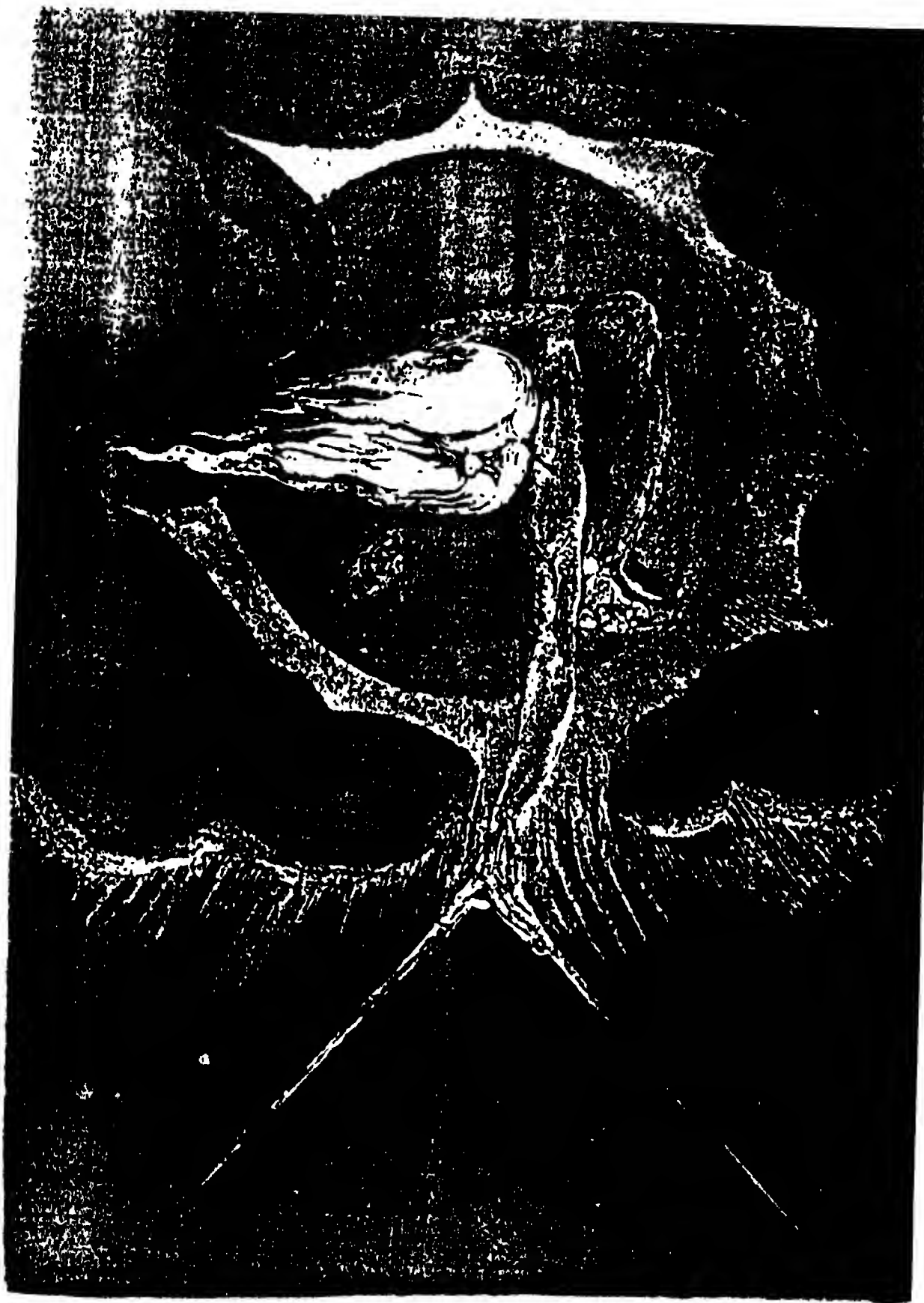
As close as the ear to the eye, and as many hairs on the mane of a horse, so close and many in number, the souls of the wicked stand, but

they see not, and hear no sound, one from the other, every one thinks thus, "I am alone."³⁹

"Cold" "Dry" and "Stony" are adjectives which are often applied to Urizen and we see that both Blake and Zoroastrianism stress not so much the physical aspects of typical hell-fire and brimstone but the wretchedness of an existence that has "no comfort, pleasantness or joy whatever," for "as the greatness of the spiritual existence is more than that of the world . . . more grievous is the terror of the punishment on the soul than that of the vileness of the demons on the body." And while normally "Where there is a fear of every other thing it is more than the thing itself, but hell is a thing worse than the fear of it."⁴⁰

Hell then is the solitary confinement of the mind, in a freezing, stinking darkness, a world of rotten food, noxious insects and reptiles. This is Urizen's world where intellectual and philosophical tyranny freezes all feeling, just as his tears freeze on his snowy white beard. While Los's outspread arms welcome liberty, Urizen, god of repression creates fetters of ice, cold black rocks that surround and constrain. Urizen's worst aspect is his hypocrisy. He seems to pity, especially when pictured in *The Songs of Experience* and in *The Notebook* but he will force everything into a "mental uniformity"⁴¹ while pretending to uphold freedom. Besides pity, in the Urizenic world, even love is perverted; alarmed by the passions and fire of desire, it humbles itself and adopts a perverse coyness. Courtship and marriage fail because of the deceits and jealousies caused by prohibitions. The concern shown by "Priests in black gowns," "God & his Priest & King" is the false, self-deceiving concern of Urizen's world for as the *Dadistan-i-Dinik* stresses "The most mischievous weapon of the demons is the habit of self-deception."⁴²

While some sort of order and reason are always necessary it is self-deception in



Pl. 77 "The Ancient of Days."

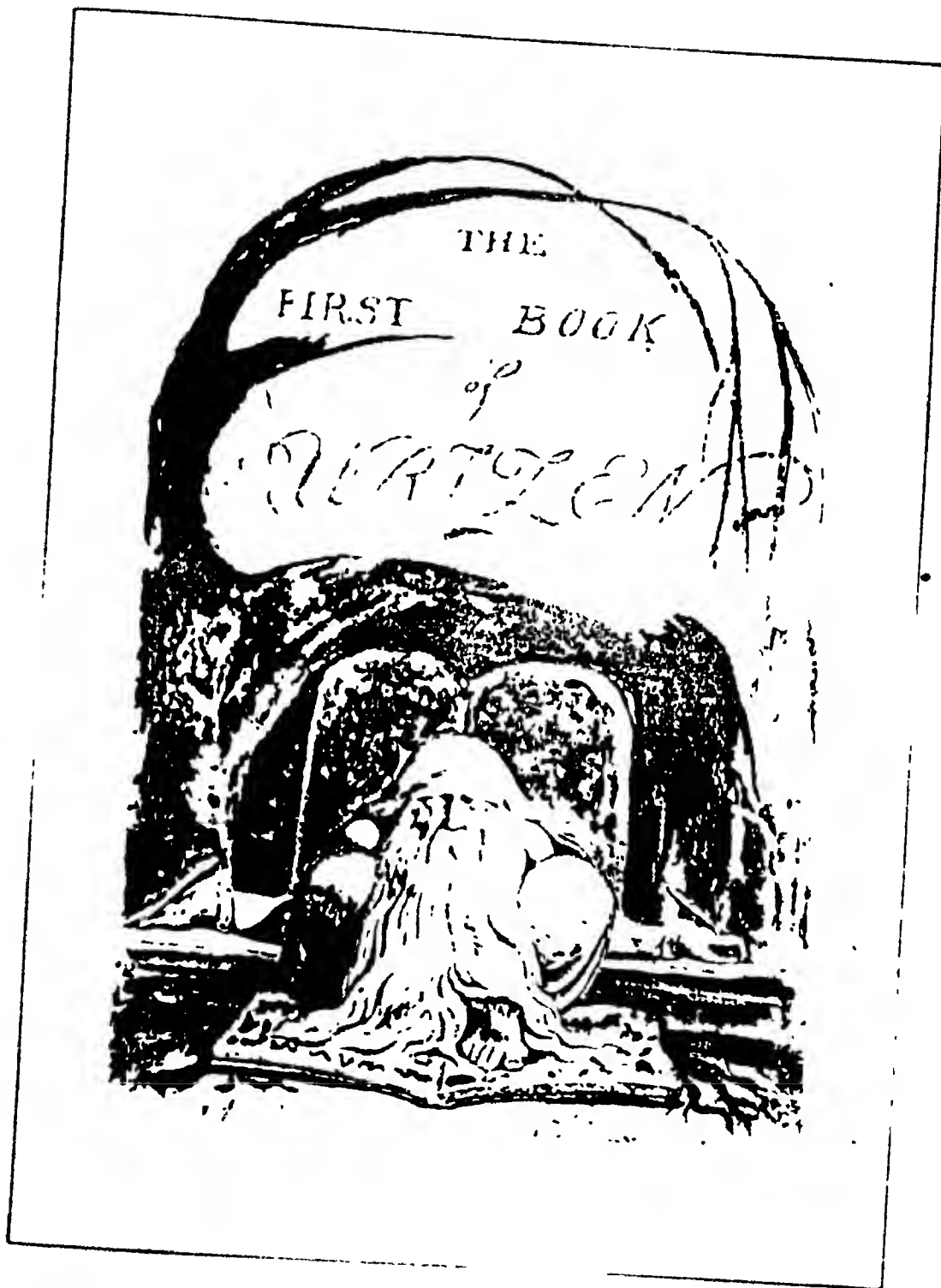
men to believe in their supremacy. Blake's attack on such "established" morality is illustrated in the well known frontispiece to *Europe*, better known as "The Ancient of Days." Urizen is looking downwards, using his compasses to circumscribe the world draw its limits and hold in. This is opposite to the Los figure which always soars upwards and outwards (See Plate 77).⁴³

The contrast therefore between old age and youth here becomes not that of wisdom versus inexperience but rigid senility and cruel atrophy, the barring of nature against desire and hope. The circle Urizen draws also stresses the fact that to the Urizenic mind time and life are cyclic, a never-ending movement which offers no hope of relief. The compasses reinforce the meaning of his name for here he limits man's happiness, he creates this world and using his compasses cuts off man from the spiritual world beyond. Urizen's error is the typical mistake of denying the unity of all existence, of refusing to accept the dualities of life, where soul and body, reason and imagination are equally important.

With *The Book of Urizen* (1794) Blake begins his analysis of spiritual conflicts, the creation of the physical body and the movement towards regeneration; themes which, developing in *The Four Zoas* and *Milton*, culminate in *Jerusalem*. *The Book of Urizen* is far more condensed and strictly structured than the longer Prophecies, and unlike *Europe* and *America* is virtually bare of topical allusions. With it Blake moves away from concerns with the world around him to deeper philosophical issues which would be true to all men at all times.

Blake intended to begin a series of "Books of Urizen" but just like his promise of the "Bible of Hell," the other books were never written. *The Book of Urizen* can be read in one sense as a satire on the Genesis stories of the Bible and Milton's creation myth, but in the light of Blake's own mythology it is perhaps more essential to see it and the Urizenic figure as the contraries to Los and his creativity. That is why wherever Urizen is illustrated or spoken of, the underlying contrast with Los is always implied. This is apparent in the very title page where Urizen sits crouched on his book, eyes tightly shut against the light, writing his book of commandments. That these are life-denying is suggested by the tombstones behind him and by the barren tree arching over the scene (see plate 78).⁴⁴

Urizen, placed now in the North, the place also of Zoroastrian demons, creates by introspection, "Self-clos'd, all repelling," "this abominable void, this soul-shudd'ring vacuum" (*U 3:1.3-5 K.*, p. 222). His error has begun at the opening of the book itself. He is already, by his own selfhood, divided from the unity of eternity. As other divisions continue Urizen has to fight the monsters for whom he himself is responsible. At the same time his rigid nature demands that he bring order out of the chaos he has created, and his weapons are the storms of wrath and the freezing powers of restriction. The books of wisdom he writes are only lists of prohibitions and therefore his creation is a mockery being totally opposed to the ideal of a joyous, limitless life. As the unity of eternity is broken he is torn apart from Los and his shelter against Los's flames is the building up of hard rock, a grave of petrified stone into which he withdraws to sleep the sleep of ignorance. Los and Urizen together were a totality, torn apart, reason cannot survive without imagination and the blacksmith creator must work to limit the formlessness of Urizen's fall. In a terrible parody of God's creation of the world Los has to forge a body that will enclose Urizen, he has to bind the horrors of Urizen's descent



Pl. 78 *The Book of Urizen. Titlepage.*

and seal off his decay before he taints eternity. With the creative weapons of fire, his imagination and his art, Los will put an end to this hell. A body must be provided for error must be made visible before it can be vanquished. Each plate details this difficult task for Urizen is:

A Self-contemplating shadow

... Age on age he lay, clos'd unknown

Brooding shut in the deep; all avoid

The petrific, abominable chaos.

(U 3.11.21-26 K., 223)

Urizen's world is one of "mountains of hail and ice" and from "the depths of dark solitude" Urizen fails to understand the necessity for action, or movement, or even life itself. Life implies pain and death and Urizen's question echoes Thel's:

I have sought for a joy without pain,

For a solid without fluctuation.

Why will you die, O Eternals?

Why live in unquenchable burnings?

(U, 4.11.10-13 K., 224)

Blake knew that "where there is capacity for enjoyment, there is the capacity of pain,"⁴⁵ but this was that Urizen still had to learn.

Self-centredness and a limited vision are apparent in the rapid use of the first-person singular "I," as Urizen recounts his idea of life. He fights fire to write his books of wisdom, "the secrets of dark contemplation" and the Book of Brass are his contribution to the universe. This book which embodies his "wisdom" declares that the

best formula for life is:

One command, one joy, one desire
 One curse, one weight, one measure
 One King, one God, one Law.

(U 4.11.38-40, K., 224)

The illustration to Plate 5 reveals Urizen stretching out his arms not to bless but to reveal this "Book of Brass." However living creation cannot accept the rigid code he promulgates and Los retaliates with fire:

Fires pour thro' the void on all sides
 On Urizen's self-begotten armies.

(US 11.15-16, K., 225)

These however are destructive fires, not life-giving flames but the dark fires of hell:

No light from the fires; all was darkness
 In the flames of Eternal fury.

(11.17-18)

To protect himself, Urizen withdraws into the rocks which in ironic parody, he frames about himself like a womb. This womb is "like a black globe" neither protective nor life-sustaining. The tragic parody of birth continues in Plate 6 for here Urizen is rent from Los's side, but instead of being born to life Urizen is "laid in stony sleep" and the Eternals realise "What is this? Death?" "Urizen is a clod of clay." Three figures falling head downwards, and bound by serpents form the illustration. They represent a defeated group and the youthful central figure appears to be Los with his fellow soldiers, caught up in the coils of Urizenic thought. While there is anguish the central figure has already spread



Pl. 79 *The Book of Urizen. Pl. 21B.*

out his arms as if to battle anew. A hideous "groaning, quashing" Los decorates the next plate where his fires now "rouz'd" he begins his work of reconstruction.

Plates 8 to 13 describe the forging of a human form for Urizen. The furnaces of Los work through the seven ages and with the help of the flames Urizen is finally complete.

This entire creation has been hideously painful to Los for sharing Urizen's fall he too has fallen and in anguished self pity divides himself. This pity takes visible form and becomes the emanation Enitharmon. Plate 19 emphasises the separation as the female form looks away from Los while he hides his face in his hands. The division of the sexes leads to sexual regeneration ultimately resulting in the birth of Orc. The child Orc is portrayed in the midst of flames, but Los himself is affected by the Urizenic world and the illustration of the family shows Los taking on the role of the jealous father. Now his beard, old face and chain of repression show the distance he has travelled from being the advocate of liberty (see plate 79).⁴⁶ Los himself is bound by a chain of jealousy graphically described:

A tightn'ing girdle grew
Around his bosom. In sobbings
He burst the girdle in twain;
But still another girdle
Oppress'd his bosom.

(U 20: Ch. VII 11.10-14, K., 233)

Orc is bound with the chain formed of these links. Urizen's shadow had succeeded in tainting Los himself but with the child Orc regeneration has begun:

All things heard the voice of the child

And began to awake to life.

(U 20:VII 11.28-29 K., 233)

Urizen awakened by life stirring about him builds his own garden of Eden but his restricted vision can create only a limited world and he soon tires of his creation, sickened even by his own children. None can keep "his iron laws one moment" and all mankind is trapped in a web, "None could break the web, no wings of fire"(1.19 K., 235). The phrase "Wings of fire" has numerous Zoroastrian connotations, it suggests the holy Fravashis and the creative element of flame and is therefore aptly contrasted here with the dark "slime" and image of a spider spinning out a trap from its own entrails. Against images of flowing flames we see here images of atrophy, petrification and decay "reptile forms shrinking together" and all things "bound down . . . To earth by their narrowing perceptions."

In the last plate Urizen sits almost as he did in Plate 1, but he no longer attempts to write, for his hands are bound, he himself is trapped in his own Net of Religion. The only hope offered is by a little green leaf of a vine growing up above Urizen's head almost flame like in structure and suggestive of Fuzon's call to Urizen's children to escape from this barren land. Fuzon, one of the four sons born in *The Book of Urizen*, is pictured as a flaming face in the sky and with him fire is again associated with liberation, for his name is obviously related to "feu" fire. As a pillar of fire, Fuzon and those children who have not been enmeshed flee from bondage. The plates of *The Book of Urizen* differ in individual copies and in each of the seven known copies individual twists of meaning are given by Blake's different ordering of his plates. While in most cases the twenty-eight plates retell the story of the book, ten are illustrations without text, which Blake shifts, stressing, as Foster-Damon says, that the "states" he is describing are eternal

and continually happening everywhere.⁴⁷ So the final message of the book is the same; it is impossible to frame iron laws for all mankind for life itself is unframable. To try and force a single pattern onto the complexity of life is to limit life as Urizen attempts, and is futile.

The Book of Urizen deals with the problem of evil and the issue of Reason. But it is not correct to believe that to Blake Reason was essentially evil. On the contrary he realised the importance of wisdom for he insisted "The fool shall not enter into Heaven let him be ever so holy"(V of L.J. K., p. 615). What Blake was attacking through the figure of Urizen was the domination of Reason as also the belief that it is infinitely superior to the Spirit and the Imagination. The need was to balance the contraries:

Reason and Newton, they are quite two things;
 For so the Swallow and the Sparrow sings.
 Reason says "Miracle": Newton says "Doubt"
 Aye! thats the way to make all Nature out.
 "Doubt, Doubt, & don't believe without experiment."
 That is the very thing that Jesus meant,
 When he said, "Only Believe! Believe & try!"
 "Try, Try, and never mind the Reason why."

(*Epigrams, verses & Fragments from the
 Note Book 1808-11, 115-12, K., 536*)

Urizen's crime is his attempt to repress natural joys, to formulate systems and measures

for emotional values and his judging of life by one standard. When Urizen himself comes under Urthona, the Spirit, life will become balanced and therefore complete. Urizen then is redeemable, he is not Satan or Ahriman, the principle of evil, but suffers more from the error of a hell cut off from the spirit. While the evil principle has to be annihilated Urizen is able to repent, to give up his constricting hold upon the imagination, his salvation comes in *The Four Zoas*:

I have Erred, & my Error remains with me.

. . . Where shall we take our stand to view the infinite and unbounded?

Or where are human feet? for Lo, our eyes are in the heavens.

(FZ IX 11:225-29 K., 363)

Urizen has broken off his shackles and chains, he has understood reality and is ready for the day of reckoning. His rehabilitation is in keeping with the Zoroastrian belief that all souls are worthy of being saved and all will enjoy harmony once the divisions of life are past.

As in Zoroastrianism, so in Blake fire triumphs over cold evil, light over darkness and creativity and health over destruction and disease. Los's fires have not only exposed Urizenic evil but changed it. In all traditions, fire has been associated with the apocalypse for it is a great cleanser, combining heat and light. To use Northrop Frye's words: "The risen body lives in the greatest possible combination of the spiritual forms of heat and light: energy or desire, and reason or vision . . . Fire destroys the solid form of nature . . . but the imagination cannot be consumed by fire, for it is fire, the burning bush



Pl. 80 The Great Sun, *L'Allegro*.



Pl. 81 Melancholy and her Companions, *Il Penseroso*.



Pl. 82 The Rout of the Rebel Angels. *Paradise Lost*.

of God which never exhausts its material."⁴⁸ Fire will play an even greater role in *Milton* and *The Four Zoas* finally bringing about the conclusion of *Jerusalem*.

Besides his Prophetic writings Blake also uses illustrations and water colours to emphasise the creativity of fire. Milton thinks of himself as young in *L'Allegro*, as growing old and contemplative in *Il Penseroso*, as spending his youth in sunshine and light, his old age in the darkness of the night. Just as his ideas change so do Blake's illustrations. A powerful Los-like figure stands in midst of life-giving flames in *The Great Sun* of *L'Allegro*, where his outspread arms and serenely confident gaze shows not merely the holiness of joy but also an open loving response to life itself. The flames from this picture burst through the sphere and an arcadian illustration shows us scenes from daily pastoral life beneath a tree filled with fairies and butterflies where angels carry food and joyously play their trumpets. In opposition to this we see Melancholy and her companions in *Il Penseroso*, depicted fully robed, like Urizen with her arms pressed close to her body, her gaze directed soulfully upwards as if scorning the joys of God's good creation (see plates 80-81).⁴⁹

Christ too appears, neither meek nor mild, but in flames of fire, directing his "bow of burning gold" at Satan's spectres in *The Rout of the Rebel Angels*, a watercolour design made in 1808 for *Paradise Lost* (See plate 82).⁵⁰

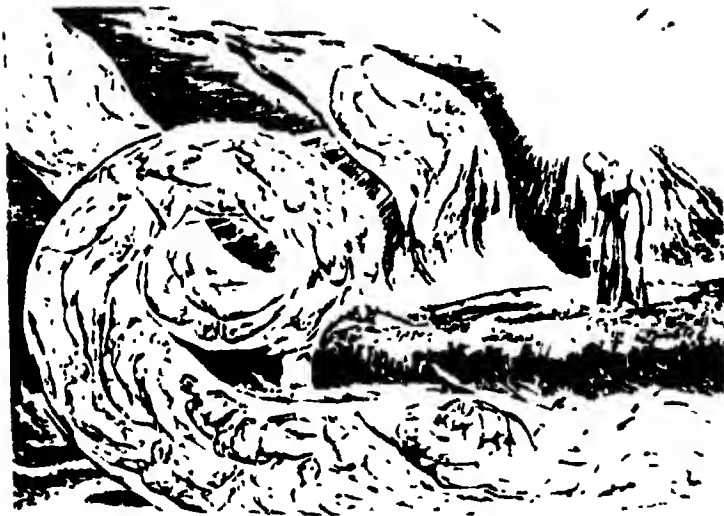
The illustrations to Dante, virtually unknown in Blake's own day, have some of Blake's most powerful use of fire in visual depictions. "Dante Adoring Christ" from The *Paradise* illustrations depicts Christ arms outstretched in blessing upon a Cross surrounded by fire and flames of renewal. While most of those in the *Inferno* depict typical hell fires, "The Circle of the Lustful: Paolo and Francesca," shows mankind being swept up in a river of solid flame, so solid that it resembles the river of molten metal that

will sear and cleanse at the end of time, the Zoroastrian Frashokereti. In *The Circle of the Falsifiers* on the other hand, although flames blaze all around, the hypocrisy of the falsifiers has created a petrified mass of stone where the stench of falsehood is so great that Dante and Virgil must cover their noses because it is unbearable (see plate 83-85).⁵¹ This scene faithfully reflects the Zoroastrian idea of hell as a place of terrible stench and unbearable putrefaction.

There are many parallels between Dante and Zoroastrian ideas. In 1892 Jivanji Jamshedji Modi read a paper entitled "The Divine Comedy of Dante and the Viraf Nameh of Ardai Viraf"⁵² at the Royal Asiatic Society, where he traces some points of striking resemblance between Dante's account of his visit to the other world and the visit of the Persian Dastur Ardai-Viraf to Hell. Both have to ford a river, the river of Viraf was formed by the great number of tears shed after the death of a person and the guides ask Viraf to advise mortals not to lament too much for the departed but to submit to the will of God as the tears impede the soul on its outward journey. Dante's stream, the Acheron, too is "the stream of lamentation"⁵³ and Blake's illustrations seem to have been influenced by both accounts.

Blake's use of the elements of Fire and Ice follows an ancient model. His use of the cosmic myth of creation, the story repeated in all three great Prophecies, also follows legends found in ancient Persian myths. If these can be seen as having universal application, it does not make the links tenuous, rather they strengthen the idea of a universal tradition, for finally, all myths and legends retell the story of the same human race.



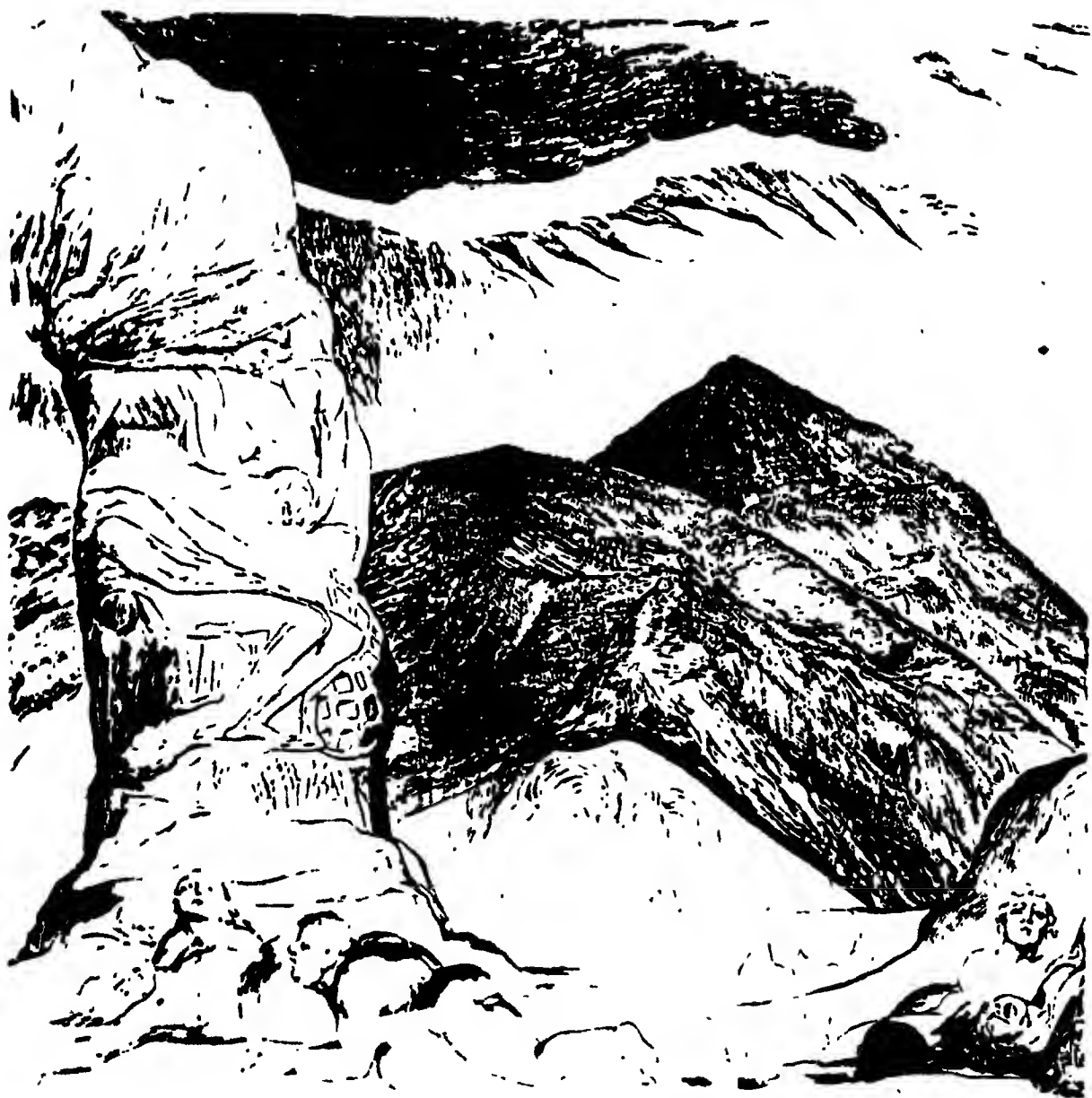


Pl. 84. *The Divine Comedy.*





Pl. 85 *The Divine Comedy.*



Notes

¹ Henry Lord, *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects in the East Indies* . . . , p. 13.

² Thomas Maurice, *A Dissertation on the Oriental Trinities extracted from the 4th and 5th volumes of Indian Antiquities*, p. 226.

³ J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Suratt in the Year 1689*, (London: 1696), p. 372.

⁴ Duchesne-Guillemin, ed., *Gathas, Yasna 43*, st. 4, p. 133.

⁵ *Ibid.*, *Yasna 46*, st. 7, p. 77. There are close links between the concept of fire as a creative force in both Zoroastrianism and Hinduism. In Hinduism too, homage to Agni (Fire) forms a basic ritual in the process of purification and exaltation, leading the worshipper to the Divinity. Agni has been called by Stella Kramrisch; "The spark and flame of life," which comes from Rta and the Godhead. Agni is also the messenger of the Gods to man and the sacrifice to fire in the Vedas is that which links heaven and earth in one sacred act performed by man. In this act all forces are working towards harmony. Therefore the worship of Agni epitomises the whole cosmic process. Agni gains for the worshipper the "favour" or "protection" of the Gods for he is a vehicle which transmutes man's offering, purifying it and making it acceptable to the Divinity. Every oblation which passes through Agni burns out the dross and maintains the essence. The kindling of Agni consists of not merely the physical action but also the mental act, the inner awakening of the flame of aspiration and inspiration, the kindling of the fire in every heart.

See Jeanine Miller, *The Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas* (London, Boston, Melbourne & Henly: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) pp. 229-262.

⁶ *Ibid.*, *Yasna* 34, st. 4, p. 43.

⁷ There are three divisions of consecrated fires, the Atash Behram or Fire of Victory, the Atash Adaran, the smaller Fire-temple, and the Atash Dadgah or household fire worshipped in every Zoroastrian home. The Fires connected with various classes of society are the Farnbag Fire of the priests, also known as the Khordad Fire or the Fire of Perfection; the Gushnasp Fire of the warrior class and the Fire Burzin Meher, the fire of the Angel of light and Mercy associated with the peasants. Another fire, the Neriosang fire, considered a spiritual fire--a messenger between God and man--is also seen as a Royal fire giving Kings courage in battle, while the Minokirk fire of the spiritual world shines only in the presence of Ahura Mazda. For a full discussion see Piloo N. Jungalwalla, "The Zoroastrian Concept of Fire" in *Rah-e-Asha: The Path of Righteousness Commemorating the Historic III World Zoroastrian Congress*, Vol. I, No. 2 (Dec. 1977), pub. by the Federation of the Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India, pp. 21-26.

⁸ Duchesne-Guillemin, *Gathas, Yasna* 47., 6 p. 101.

⁹ Piloo N. Jungalwalla, "The Zoroastrian Concept of Fire," p. 25.

¹⁰ James Darmesteter, trans., *The Zend Avesta Part II: The Sirozahs Yasts and Nyayis SBE* Vol. 23, p. 359. Also see p. 360.

¹¹ Firoze M. Kotwal, & James W. Boyd, ed., *A Guide to the Zoroastrian Religion: A Nineteenth Century Catechism with Modern Commentary*. Studies in World Religions 3 of the Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions. Chicago; California; Scholars Press, 1982, p. xvi.

¹² Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, p. 60.

¹³ The Takht-i-Suleiman is felt to have been a Sasanian foundation made to house the ancient fire Adar Gusnasp. See Mary Boyce "On the Zoroastrian Temple Cult of Fire" rpt. the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 95, No. 3 (July-Sept 1975), pp. 462-65.

¹⁴ I.J.S. Taraporewala, *The Religion of Zarathustra*, p. 41 and for Plate 67 see Ruthven Todd, *Tracks in the Snow: Studies in English Science and Art*. (London: The Grey Walls Press, 1946), p. 53, "The Covenant."

¹⁵ See Bryant's *Mythology* Vol. II, p. I and Hyde, Tab IX. Close-up.

¹⁶ *Yasna* LVIII (sp. LVII), L.H. Mills, ed., *The Zend Avesta* Part III SBE.31, p. 308.

¹⁷ For a full discussion of the various drafts see Martin K. Nurmi, "Blake's Revisions of the Tyger" *PMLA* (1956), rpt. in Margaret Bottrall, ed., *William Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1970), pp. 198-215.

Plate 69: Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, pl. 42, p. 84.

¹⁸ Michael Davis, *William Blake: A new kind of Man*, p. 57.

¹⁹ Stewart Crehan, *Blake in Context* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, Humanities Press, 1984), p. 125.

²⁰ Gilchrist, *Life*, p. 100, and Malkin quoted by Morton D. Paley, *Energy and The Imagination*, p. 37.

²¹ Crehan, p. 130-31.

²² Paley, p. 42.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁴ Paley, pp. 52-55.

²⁵ Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, *Blake's Human Form Divine*, pp. 73 & 145. Jung while tracing the universal use of the fire symbol notes how the Zoroastrian heresy of Mithraism portrays some of the earliest depictions of the fires of creation. He recognises that the Christian fires of the Apocalypse have close links with Mithraic liturgy but feels that "the visionary images of both texts are developed from a source, not limited to one place, but found in the soul of many diverse people." For Jung the symbols of light, fire and the sun have their psychological roots deep within every man. See C.G. Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of The Libido. A Contribution to the History of the Evolution of Thought.* trans., Beatrice M. Hinkle, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1933), pp. 60-63.

²⁶ To the Alchemists fire is "The agent of transmutation" since all things derive from & return to fire. It is the seed reproduced in each successive life and is thereby linked with fecundity. It is also seen associated with gold. Paracelsus drew parallels between fire and life pointing out that both must feed upon other lives to keep alive. See J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* trans. Jack Sage with foreword by Herbert Read (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 100-101.

²⁷ Paley, p. 74.

²⁸ Plates 70-71 from Mellor, pp. 73 & 145.

²⁹ L.H. Mills trans., *The Zend-Avesta: Part III SBE*, Vol. 31, pp. 284-85.

³⁰ Maurice, p. 310. *Plate 72* is taken from Hyde, Tab. III. Mithra is sometimes called "Sol Invictus." An interesting cross-cultural reference is that the Armenians too have a fire-god seen in the form of a young man. The Armenian Vahagn was born in the hollow of a reed-stalk and the following song records the story of his birth:

"The heavens and the earth travailed,
There travailed also the purple sea,
The travail held
The red reed (stalk) in the sea.
Through the hollow of the reed (stalk) a smoke rose
Through the hollow of the reed (stalk) a flame rose
And out of the flame ran forth a youth.
He had hair of fire
He had a beard of flame
And his eyes were suns."

See Richard Karl Payne, *The Tantric Ritual of Japan: Feeding The Gods: The Shingon Fire Ritual* (International Academy of Indian Culture & Aditya Prahashan: Sata-Pitaka Series, Into-Asian Literature, Vol: 365, 1991), pp. 38-39.

³¹ *Plate 73 The Bowman* courtesy, Dr. Kathleen Raine from Geoffrey Keynes, ed., *Blakes Pencil Drawings Second Series* (Nonesuch Press, 1956), plate 22. Another parallel which may be contained in the plate is a reference to "Arjoon, the mighty bowman," taken from Charles Wilkins, *The Bhagwat-Geeta or Dialogues of Kreesna and Arjoon in Eighteen Lectures with notes. Translated from the original in the Sanskreet or Ancient Language of the Brahmans* (London: Printed for C. Nourse opposite

Catharine's Street in the Strand, MDCCLXXXV), p. 135. Blake had done a painting of Wilkins Translating *The Geeta*.

³² Plate 74, Titlepage taken from David V. Erdman, ed., *The Illuminated Blake* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), p. 175.

³³ Plate 75 Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 178.

³⁴ Plate 76 Bindman, p. 288.

³⁵ Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, pp. 46-47.

³⁶ Northrop Frye, p. 252.

³⁷ E.W. West, ed., *Pahlavi Texts Part I* SBE 5, pp. 192-93.

³⁸ Raine, *Blake and Tradition II*, p. 56. Hagstrum, *Poet and Painter*, pp. 105-06.

³⁹ West, ed., *Pahlavi Texts Bundahis* SBE.5, p. 47. For *Arda-Viraf-Namah* see FN 2, p. 114.

⁴⁰ E.W. West, trans., *SBE Vol. 18: Pahlavi Texts Part II: Dadistan-i-Dinik, & the Epistles of Manuskihar*, 1882, rpt. (Delhi; Varanasi; Patna: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), p. 58.

⁴¹ Frye, p. 222.

⁴² West, trans., *Pahlavi Texts II* SBE.18, p. 106.

⁴³ Plate 77 Bindman, p. 167. "The Ancient of Days."

⁴⁴ Plate 78 Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 183. *Book of Urizen*, Titlepage

⁴⁵ Gilchrist quoting H.C. Robinson, p. 335.

⁴⁶ *Plate 79* Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 203.

⁴⁷ Foster-Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*, p. 354. The argument here has followed the order of the Keynes edition and the plates in Erdman's *Illuminated Blake*.

⁴⁸ Frye, p. 196.

⁴⁹ *Plates 80-81* Mellor, *Blake's Human Form Divine*, pp. 274 & 278.

⁵⁰ *Plate 82* Raine, *Blake and Tradition II*, p. 193.

⁵¹ *Plate 83* Dante Adoring Christ from Paley & Phillips, p. 152.

Plates 84-85 Plates from Bindman, pl. 647 & 652. See Melville Best Anderson, trans., & ed., *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*. With Notes and elucidations by the translators and an Introduction by Arthur Livingston & Thirty-Two Drawings by William Blake. Now printed for the First Time (New York: The Heritage Press, 1944).

Unfortunately the illustrations from this edition were not made available for copy.

⁵² Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, "The Divine Comedy of Dante and the Viraf Nameh of Ardai Viraf." Read on 26th Feb 1892, the Hon'ble Sir Raymond West in the Chair, rpt. *Asiatic Papers: Read Before the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Bombay: Printed at the Bombay Education Society's Press, Byculla, 1905).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Chapter - V

From Doubt to Faith: The Emergence of Consciousness

Part I: *Vala or The Four Zoas*

He who shall teach the Child to Doubt

The rotting Grave shall ne'er get out.

He who respects the Infant's faith

Triumphs over Hell & Death.

(Auguries of Innocence)

Blake's mental state while working on the longer Prophetic Books swung between two extremes, both expressed in letters he wrote during that period. There is first the despair of never finding an audience to understand his visions:

O why was I born with a different face?

Why was I not born like the rest of my race?

. . . Then my verse I dishonour, My pictures despise

My person degrade and my temper chastise;

And the pen is my terror, the pencil my shame;

All my Talents I bury, and dead is my fame.

In contrast to this dejection, is the hope seen in his famous letter to William Hayley after his visit to the Truchsessian Gallery where he was, "again enlightened with the light I

enjoyed in my youth . . . I am really drunk with intellectual vision whenever I take a pencil or graver into my hand . . . as I have not been for twenty dark, but very profitable years."¹ In all the longer works we see these swings between extremes of despair and soaring hopes as Blake moves from symbols and ideas to formulation and expression of his great myth. Myth has been called "the experience of the sacred,"² and Blake's myth, repeated in *The Four Zoas*, *Milton* and *Jerusalem* tells in Christian terminology the universal sacred story of Man and Creation. Myths are generally either theological, dealing with the genesis of the Gods, or cosmological, dealing with the creation of this earth and man. Blake's myth using both theological and cosmological elements re-enacts much matter found in the Zoroastrian creation myth, *The Bundahishn*, and at the same incorporates some of the theological issues of Zoroastrianism. It also seems to take a good deal from the great myth of Zurvan, the Persian legend of the Devil begotten of Doubt, which, though it remains apart from the official religion, has so much supporting evidence that its authenticity and influence cannot be questioned. In addition the internal structure of Blake's three long Prophecies follows the four-fold pattern of Doubt, Division, Illumination and Unity that forms the basis of the ancient myth of the Emergence of Consciousness which is to be found in the Pahlavi texts, particularly in the *Denkart*, the collection of religious learning dating from the late Sasanian period.

Mary Boyce states that the Sasanians, probably following the example of the later Achaemenians were Zurvanites,³ but we must realise that the Zurvanites and orthodox Mazdeans were always two branches of the Zoroastrian church rather than two opposing faiths. There is a good deal of discussion amongst scholars regarding the exact position of Zurvanism versus the orthodox religion but on the whole it is felt that in Sasanian times orthodox Zoroastrianism remained strongest nearest Zoroaster's homeland in northern and eastern Iran, while the western parts of the country came under the

influence of Zurvanism to a greater extent.⁴ What is important to note is that the northern regions being remote, it was the Zurvanite manifestation of the Persian faith that came under observance and was noted by many western travellers. The travellers and antiquarians through whom Blake was exposed to Zoroastrianism use Pahlavi accounts of the creation myth from the *Bundahishn* and also recount the Zurvan story.

R.C. Zaehner's *Zurvan: A Zoroastrian Dilemma*⁵ is the seminal work for the study of Zurvanism. Zaehner traces the growth of Zurvanism with the growth of Manichaeism, for the Manichaeans, adapting their system to the religious terminology of Iran selected not Ohrmazd as the representative of their supreme God but Zurvan. Zurvan becomes their "Father of Greatness" while Ohrmazd becomes the God-man, who though wholly divine is inferior to the Father.⁶ In the Pahlavi books some parts of the *Menok-i-Krat* and *Denkart* reveal a religion which Zaehner calls "semi-Zervanite,"⁷ an attempt to fuse conflicting doctrines. While the orthodox strongly attack the issue of the brotherhood of Ohrmazd and Ahriman, *Yasna* 30.5 of *The Gathas* also speaks of the two primeval twins. The lack of doctrinal consistency on these issues gives rise to much confusion, but serves to emphasize the fluidity of Zoroastrian dogmas in Sasanian times. Since Blake uses some of these "semi-Zervanite" ideas it is essential to detail briefly the basic ideas of Zurvanism before turning to the *Denkart* myth.

Zurvan Akarana or Boundless Time is regarded as the First Principle, as Justice, Fate and Fortune. He "the great God" sacrifices for a thousand years, "that perchance he might have a son whose name should be Ohrmazd, who should create heaven and earth and all that in them is: and after offering sacrifice for a thousand years, he began to doubt

the efficacy of his act saying, 'Are these sacrifices which I offer of any use . . . or do I strive in vain?' and while he considered thus Ohrmazd and Ahriman were conceived in their mother's womb."⁸ Zurvan's doubt becomes exteriorized in the birth of the evil one, Ahriman, while from the divine nature and the merit of the sacrifice Ohrmazd is born. This seems to reinforce the ancient belief or scruple, persistent till this day that when ritual acts are performed there must be complete faith as to their efficacy lest they become invalid or as in this case have ambivalent results, for the Pahlavi texts reiterate "I must have no doubt, but that profit arises from good works and loss from sin."⁹

So Zurvan becomes the father of Good and Evil. This imperfection in the Godhead, normally the source of justice and wisdom, creates a clash and the battle between good and evil begins. This clash must take place in finite time for ultimately, reverting to orthodox Zoroastrianism, the balance of good must be restored. The myth justifies the conclusion by stating that Zurvan perceiving there were two sons in the womb, vowed that whichever should come into his presence first would receive the kingdom. Ohrmazd, conceived from wisdom, divined this thought and guilelessly divulged it to Ahriman. Since Ohrmazd the elder, lay nearer the egress of the womb Ahriman, the schemer, ripped the womb open and sprang out. Ahriman then went forth to master the world while Ohrmazd received the Holy Barsom, and the powers of creation, the power of prayer and the priesthood. With this Ohrmazd received the strength of the sacrifice through which ultimately He, as the true inheritor, could bring the power of Ahriman to an end.

That Blake was influenced by the Zurvan myth can be seen in the sketch "Jehovah with his two sons Satan and Adam" and by his great *Läocoon* engraving. Numerous statues of Zurvan-Kronos have been discovered and described in western art, in all of which Zurvan's body is encircled by a snake. In the *Läocoon* group Jah is portrayed with



Pl. 86 *Jehovah with his two sons Satan and Adam.*

his two sons, Satan and Adam, and a snake coils across the central father-figure. Surrounding the illustration are Blake's ideas not only on Good and Evil, but on art, the Imagination and Man. "The Eternal Body of Man is the Imagination." "A Poet, A Painter, a Musician, an Architect: the Man or woman who is not one of these is not a Christian." "All that we see is Vision, from generated organs gone as soon as come, permanent in the Imagination, consider'd as Nothing by the natural Man"(K., p. 776) (see Plates 86-87).¹⁰ It is almost as if Blake knowing Man was to be that part of creation most affected by the battle between the two sons, Satan and Adam, glorifies humanity making it in his statements the centre and circumference of all life and the human imagination the measure of all being.

The Zurvan myth is in many respects a literal interpretation of *Yasna 30* of the *Gathas*. There the Holy Spirit Vohu Manah and the Destructive Spirit Aka Manah are seen as twins; if so, they obviously had to have a parent. That parent here becomes the Infinite; Zurvan literally stands for "zaman" time, but can also be used to mean the Infinite, therefore Zurvan the God comes to represent Infinite Time, the original Principle behind Creation. The "Fall" then does not arise out of evil in man, but from Doubt or momentary unsureness of self at the very heart of God and the whole purpose of the cosmic drama which unfolds is to restore this shattered unity of being. This cannot be done by trying to re-integrate the Devil into the Absolute, it can only be achieved by eliminating him altogether. Ahriman is the concretization of imperfection and God, the personification of Wisdom, Goodness and light, cannot permit such a flaw. The godhead once divided can only be restored by the total destruction of evil when with the abolition of finite Time, goodness will dwell perpetually in an infinite Universe.

I

The Denkart myth of the Emergence of Consciousness represents an assimilation by orthodoxy of part of this Zurvan myth. One important difference is that Ohrmazd here is identified with the Infinite, for the *Denkart* condemns the theory that Ohrmazd and Ahriman could be brothers. While the Zurvan myth, like the *Bundahisn*, is primarily concerned with the evolution of the world of nature, the *Denkart* is concerned with the more Blakean concept of the order of intellect and will. The myth itself is simple. During theological discussion a question is raised as to how right consciousness arises and as a natural extension an answer is sought as to the genesis of Evil or Ahriman. The *Denkart* answers in detail. As Ohrmazd, the Divinity gropes towards True knowledge, there is an initial failure to reach full self-consciousness. This puts Ohrmazd in great peril for he doubts and thereby risks the loss of his very essence, which is an eternal and true wisdom. This doubt gives rise to the division of his personality and Ahriman, the Evil one, develops whom Ohrmazd must subdue. He makes an effort of total introspection, his "essence and attributes turned back into themselves in order to come to know their own ground." To eliminate the destructive element engendered by incomplete knowledge Ohrmazd must first learn to know himself as he really is. He must know himself as infinite and possessed of infinite knowledge. Only this true self-knowledge will enable him "to rise up for the creative act."

Ohrmazd's search for knowledge engenders illumination or everlasting light, for light is the symbol of spiritual insight. This is the light of wisdom, proper to the true nature of Ohrmazd and from it proceeds the Spirit of Truth which enables Ohrmazd to know all things as they truly are. By knowing himself and knowing his adversary too he learns he must create or emanate his own Universe of Truth If his adversary, the Lie, is to be defeated. Ohrmazd now knows himself as Divine, he must again be united within

himself and grow into the knowledge of all things. Only then will he be able to return all creation to its proper sphere of action in the rule of perfect joy and all that is good.¹¹

Ohrmazd goes on to create heaven and earth as his first line of defence against the aggressor. After a fixed period--nine thousand years--time will end. But unlike Hindu cosmology the Universe created by Ohrmazd in all its infinite variety does not revert to the One. All good creation has an eternal substance which will constitute the final body of a universe renewed and perfected, because it is purged of all corruption. Matter and spirit will be reunited and now undefiled will become immortal.

We have already seen the main outlines of *The Bundahisn*, and while it is obvious that various theories about creation existed, gradually the myths of this text evolved as the accepted Zoroastrian version. Blake had direct access to this Pahlavi text which, brought back by Anquetil du Perron and translated with *The Avesta*, formed the basis of western knowledge regarding Iranian cosmogony. Bryant's *Mythology* has a long quotation from this creation-myth, which must have provided Blake's first exposure to the story.¹²

Anquetil-du-Perron's text is known as the *Indian Bundahisn*. Since the text was in a mutilated condition it contains less than the complete work of the *Greater* or *Iranian Bundahisn*. The thirty-six chapters of this book can be scanned very briefly here. The first section deals with cosmogony, the separation of Ohrmazd-light from Ahriman's darkness, Ohrmazd's creation of the world of time and space and the Ahrimanic attack. We see the creation of the Amesha Spentas the Beneficent Immortals and the seasons. Material creation consists of the sky, water, earth, plants, the Primal Bull and Gayomard, the first man. The creation of the stars and luminaries and the all important creation of fire is also described. The link between material creation and the Immortals who adopt

each aspect of it is seen as a part of God's design of using the material world in His battle against evil. The *Bundahishn* stresses the fact that it is the evil spirit who causes the division of the once united and happy world. After Ahriman's attack on material creation the earth is split up into seven zones or 'Keshvars' and mountains spring up on its earlier level surface. Thus the theme of division and the reunification necessary becomes an integral part of the Zoroastrian myth, both for material creation and in the mind and psyche of man.

The Zoroastrian myth also lays great stress on the role of Man. Man, the last creation of Ahura Mazda, holds a unique position for the evil spirit has never been able to create a being comparable to him. It is therefore in his attack on man that the evil one is the most vicious. In the course of this attack the Primal Bull dies but manages to produce all plant and animal seeds from his body, while from the body and seed of Gayomard arise the first human couple born out of the stem of a rivas (rhubarb) plant. Various other myths intersperse the long story. We meet Az, the Primal whore, and learn of the giant Tree of all seeds. The *Bundahishn* also deals with the fate of the soul after death. For the individual the decisive moment comes after the three days that the soul spends near its body. At the dawning of the fourth day the soul goes to the Bridge of the Separator (the Chinvat Bridge) and judgment is revealed; it will either be welcomed by a beautiful maiden, personification of its virtuous acts, or taunted by an old hag, embodiment of its evil deeds. The journey continues either to Infinite light and beatitude in the House of Song for the virtuous, or to torment for the sinful, until the Final Judgment. Details of the collective fate of mankind at the conclusion of the myth, intermingle with historical details of Alexander's conquest and the invasions of Islam. A series of prophecies describe the end of the world when mankind reverting to original purity will cease eating and await the Frashokereti or Renewal of Existence. Then all men, resurrected to their

perfected forms, will be judged and bear the consequences of their deeds. After this will come the ordeal of molten metal which to the righteous will seem as pleasant as wading in warm milk and to the wicked will be a searing purge. All families and loved ones will be reunited, demons destroyed. The evil spirit will sink away, the valleys and mountains which sprang up during Ahriman's attack will disappear and the earth shall become level. The molten metal will finally seal up all evil and on the perfected earth men and women, henceforth without "shadows" and without sin, will enjoy a Paradisal existence. --

If the myths of Zoroastrianism were stated as bare, literal facts they would undermine the structure of a religion based on belief in freedom of thought and will. Therefore we must see these stories as visualizations of the subjective states of the soul and the psychology of the individual. The contraries of Heaven and Hell, reward and punishment are experiences of the Spirit. Heaven, the God-like state in the Abode of Song is joy and inner illumination, while falsehood is darkness and punishment, a spiritual blight. Similarly the concept of the Chinval Bridge is symbolical, it is the Bridge of Choice and judgment the final crossing of which is determined by the selections man makes not after but before death. Consequently in Zoroastrian theology it is man who is always responsible. Man has to overcome not merely external evil but the ignorance and errors of his own soul. That alone is true evolution, and evil can be defeated only with the ultimate attainment by all of Wisdom and Truth. Evil will be conquered when all Being has liberated itself and reunited the divisions of the inner self.

It is this psychological base that we find traced in Blake's myth of Albion, all man, with its divisions of the self and the Four Zoas, and its evolution through the error

of selfhood to final wisdom and illumination when all divisions and differences are resolved in a glorious joy-filled reunification. Blake's myth takes the form of the epic of mankind and following the *Denkart* pattern it is an inward epic. Désirée Hirst calls Blake "The first epic poet who dared to set the scene of action purely in the human mind,"¹³ seeing him as one who anticipated the great psychological discoveries of Freud and Jung, but we can also see here a harking back to the ancient Persian studies of human psychology.

II

Blake, just before beginning his three long Prophetic Books, was occupied for almost eighteen months on the water colours and the engravings for Young's poem *Night Thoughts*. Between 1795-1797 he had done five hundred and thirty seven water colour illustrations and engraved forty-three of them. Blake was obviously in sympathy with Young or else he would never have undertaken such a vast project. Young's vision of the human condition was however that of a vale of tears. Blake did not blindly accept this idea, nor did he follow Young's codified prescriptions of human morality. Instead, Blake interpreted through his drawings that part of Young's message which interested him. While Young's bitter rejection of joy is a far cry from Blake's enthusiasm, the other-worldliness of Young's poem, and its insistence on immortality appealed to him strongly.

A brief "Explanation of the Engravings" is included in most copies of the published poem, and a quick glance at these is important. Not only do they help us know Blake's mind during a long period during which we have no poetry but the illustrations reappear with some changes in later and greater pictures. In particular there is a definite

[19]

O how unlike the Chorus of the Skies?
 O how unlike those Shouts of Joy, that shake
 The whole *Eden*? How the Concave rings?
 Nor strange! when Deities their Voice exalt;
 And louder far, than when *Cressus* rols,
 To see *Cressus*'s godlike Aim, and End,
 So well accomplish'd! So divinely clos'd!
 To see the mighty *Draught*'s last Act
 (As men) in Glory rising o'er the rest:
 No fancy'd Goe, a GOD indeed, descends,
 To solve all *Knots*; to strike the *Moral* home;
 To throw full Day on darkest Scenes of Time;
 To clear, commend, exalt, and crown, the Whole:
 Hence, in one Peal of loud, eternal Praise,
 The chorus's Spectators thunder their Applause,
 And the vast Void beyond, Applause re-echoes.

WHAT CAN AN I? --

Andst applauding Worlds,
 And Worlds celestial, is there found on Earth,
 A peevish, dissident, rebellious String,
 Which jars on the grand Chorus, and complains?

D 2

Confess

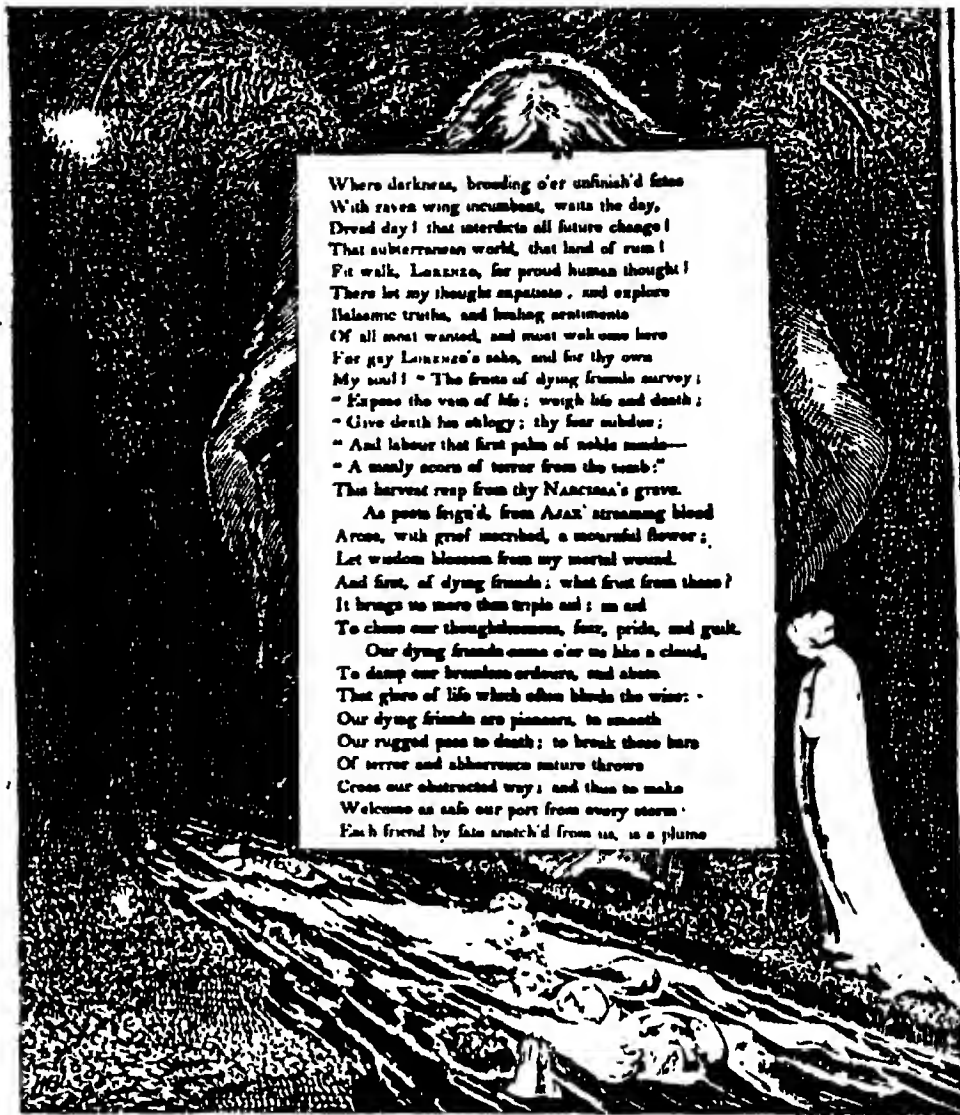
link between scenes and ideas from Blake's creation myth and the *Night Thoughts* illustrations. This supports the idea that Blake had conceived the myth of *The Four Zoas* before he began illustrating Young's poem. Though the dating of the manuscript so far makes it difficult to prove, it is likely that the *Night Thoughts* illustrations contain gropings towards the imagery and myth finally used in *The Four Zoas*.¹⁴ Another link between these two works is that much of the later part of *The Four Zoas* was written on blank spaces in proof sheets of Blake's engravings for *Night Thoughts*. This strengthens one's belief that Blake possibly chose particular proof sheets for their pictorial relevance to his later myth.

While all the *Night Thoughts* illustrations cannot be studied in the context of Zoroastrianism, there are some, with thematic links connecting them with the myths just described. These plates, repeated later by Blake in *The Four Zoas* and in Blair's *The Grave* seem to indicate Zoroastrian aspects which Blake found to be of particular interest. Some of them are considered here.

As we have already seen Keynes had remarked on the Zoroastrian etching taken from Bryant whose frieze of figures with arms upraised and crossed was to become one of Blake's frequently repeated illustrations. This drawing, Ch. IX, p. 19, of *Night Thoughts* is meant to illustrate "Those Shouts of Joy, that shake the whole Ethereal." For Blake the line of joyous angels whose raised arms cross each other, suggesting an unending heavenly multitude, is clearly one of the pictorial links with Persia (see plate 88).¹⁵ The angels in this illustrations, as in the Zoroastrian frieze taken originally from Kaempfer's *Amoenitates Exoticae*, stand for joyous creation a "grand Chorus," "in one Peal of loud eternal Praise," a symbol most clearly elaborated in the *Job* illustration "When the morning stars sang together."

This joyous attitude contrasts sharply with Young's rejection of life. But both poets affirm spiritual redemption, the cleansing and renewal after death. While in Young's poem *Death and Time* are familiar abstractions, the most powerful visual representations are those of the end of the world and the resurrection. If "A skeleton discovering the first symptoms of reanimation on the sounding of the archangel's trump" (*Night II*, p. 19) and "Angels conveying the spirit of the good man to heaven" (*Night II*, p. 41), both found also in Blair's *The Grave*, can be explained as reflecting common western beliefs, two plates, (see plates 89-90)¹⁶ illustrate a flow like that of a river. Plate 89, which is Plate 54 of *Night III* is almost identical to *Night VII* (a) of *The Four Zoas* illustrating lines 220-250,¹⁷ while in plate 90 a flowing river of flame is filled with figures moving heavenwards. Both these plates visualize the Zoroastrian tradition of the final great ordeal. On passing through the river of molten metal the wicked will be painfully purged of sin, while to the good it will be like warm milk lapping gently around. It is this aspect which is stressed in plate 89, for one man tears his hair in torment, another stares fixedly ahead, while a young innocent child is unhurt even delighted at the event. Young's lines too refer to the end "Dread day! That interdicts all future change." While Young's stream contains his "dying friends," the hope of the poem lies in the resurrection.

The poem also contains numerous portraits of Christ, image and promise of the life to come. Of these No. 264 is the most significant. It portrays a Christ who with his arms outspread depicts not primarily the agony of the Crucifixion but a gathering of all Being in his embrace. The position and the radiance, with deliberate lines of light spreading downward like the tail of the guardian-*Fravashi* figure suggests a Christ whose all encompassing vision absorbs both the physical and the spiritual self and brings a message of salvation to the poet and all mankind (see plate 91).¹⁸



Where darkness, brooding o'er unfinish'd fates
 With raven wing incumbent, waits the day,
 Dread day! that interdicts all future change!
 That subterranean world, that land of rum!
 Fit walk, LARSEN, for proud human thought!
 There let my thoughts expatiate, and explore
 Halcyon truths, and hushful sentiments
 Of all most wanted, and most woe-ome here
 For gay LARSEN's sake, and for thy own
 My soul! - The frons of dying friends survey;
 - Expose the vein of life; weigh his and death;
 - Give death his obituary; thy fear subdued;
 - And labour that first pain of noble minds -
 - A manly score of terror from the tomb!"
 This harvest reap from thy NANCY's grave.
 As poets frigid, from ADAM's streaming blood
 Arise, with grief inscribed, a mournful flower;
 Let wisdom blossom from my mortal wound.
 And first, of dying friends: what fruit from these?
 It brings us more than triple aid; an end
 To chase our thoughtlessness, fear, pride, and guilt.
 Our dying friends come o'er us like a cloud,
 To damp our burning ardours, and abate
 That glare of life which often blinds the wise: -
 Our dying friends are pioneers, to smooth
 Our rugged pass to death; to break those bars
 Of terror and abhorrence nature throws
 Cross our obstructed way; and thus to make
 Welcome as safe our port from every storm.
 Each friend by fate snatch'd from us, is a plume

Pl. 89 Night Thoughts Illustrations.



(10)

Sweet Harmonist! and Beautiful as sweet!
 And young as beautiful! and Soft, as young!
 And Gay as soft! and Innocent as gay!
 And Happy (if aught Happy *here*) as Good!
 For Fortune fund had built her nest on High:
 Like Birds quite exquisite of Note and Plume,
 Transfixt by *Fate* (who loves a lofty Mark)
 How from the Summit of the Grove she fell,
 And left it Unharmonious? All its Charm
 Extinguist in the Wonders of her Song!
 Her Song still vibrates in my ravisht Ear,
 Still melting There, and with voluptuous Pain
 (O to forget her!) trilling thro' my Heart!

Song, beauty, youth, love, virtue, joy! this Group
 Of bright Ideas, Flowers of Paradise
 As yet unforfeit! in one blaze we bind,
 Kneel, and present it to the Skies; as All
 We guests of Heaven: And these were all her Own:
 And



Pl. 91 *Night Thoughts.*

III

The Four Zoas, The Torments of Love & Jealousy in The Death and Judgement of Albion, The Ancient Man, was the final title of Blake's longest poem originally named *Vala or the Death and Judgement of the Ancient Man A Dream in Nine Nights*. Blake never finished it, the manuscript is in The British Museum and it has been very rarely reproduced. The Ellis and Yeats edition gave an "improved" version of the text where passages were changed according to the editors' notions of what Blake intended. Only in 1925 did Keynes first publish the text correctly. Because of the confusions in the ms copy there are numerous textual problems in the poem, but in 1963 G.E. Bentley Jr. reproduced the facsimile with all Blake's additions and corrections page by page.¹⁹

Vala or The Four Zoas, still remains probably the least read of the major Romantic poems, but it contains some of Blake's most powerful fragments and on the whole it is his most ambitious work. It also records a crucial change in Blake's outlook by its development of his mythology and his shift from doubt to faith. The difficulty in reading arises because this poem tries to incorporate all Blake's myths into a single narrative.

While Blake uses St. John's Gospel as his explanation for the four-fold unity of man "That they may all be one, even as thou Father art in me"(17:21-23), the word "Zoa" itself is taken from the New Testament Greek "Zwa" or "Life" of Revelations(4:6-8). The word is never used in the text, but its source is referred to in *Night IX* where Blake translates it as "Life" or living creatures. In addition Ezekiel's Vision of God suggests the basic shape of the poem, being the subject of one of Blake's grandest water-colours, "Ezekiel's Vision," painted while he was still probably working on *The Four Zoas*. Blake closely associated himself with the prophet "crying in the wilderness" and in *The Four*

Zoas he seemed in part to be writing out his own vision of the human-divine (see plate 92).²⁰

As the "Song of the Aged Mother," very similar to a Sybil's prophecy, the aim of *The Four Zoas* is to perceive the eternal in all things, and its plot, simplistically, is the fall and resurrection of Albion--All Man. But Albion is portrayed as passively sinking into sleep while the actual struggle continues between his four Zoas and their emanations. The real hero of the poem is Los, Albion's great champion, the great opponent being Urizen. Jesus takes an active part as the truth of Christianity, opposed to Rahab's false doctrines: In keeping with the concept of an interior epic the setting is in the four-fold Universe of mental states--Eden, Beulah, Urizen's realm and Ulro. Like the *Night Thoughts* this poem is divided into nine "Nights" beginning with the Fall and the splitting up of man's Zoas and travelling not only through mortal life, but the death of the physical body and resurrection. Described as a "dream," like a dream it is going to take us deep into our psyches, that part which lies beneath the surface and as in a dream it is about strange but important emotional and imaginative experiences. All the time it stresses that our world cannot be reduced merely to rational understanding.

Though the title-page is dated 1797 it is probable that *The Four Zoas* was worked upon most in Felpham for a letter to Thomas Butts on 25 April 1803 seems its first description:

I have in these years composed an immense number of verses on one grand theme . . . The Persons and Machinery intirely new . . . an immense Poem Exists which seems to be the Labour of a long life, all produc'd without Labour or Study.

(K., p. 823)



Pl. 92 *The Whirlwind. Ezekiel's Vision.*

After Blake returned to London, he continued to add material to the poem and the psychological account of Man intermingled with Blake's personal life. The quarrel with Hayley, London at the time of war, all entered the poem. Finally it incorporated far too much and became impossible to complete. Blake's own ideas had changed, he transferred some of the material to his later epics and left this great task incomplete.

At the very beginning of his epic Blake, realising that true battles are fought in the mind, decided that his was to be a story of "Intellectual battle"(F2 1.6, K., 264), the story of Mans':

Fall into Division & his Resurrection to Unity:

His fall into the Generation of decay & death & his

Regeneration by the Resurrection from the dead

(11 21-23, K., 264)

Thus from the beginning of Night I there is hope of salvation, a promise of potential divinity, unlike the inconclusive gropings of the shorter Prophetic Books. While he worked on the early *Nights of Vala or The Four Zoas* Blake however often suffered from great despair. This is reflected in the letters of those years. Blake confessed to Cumberland on 2 July 1800 that he had only just begun "to Emerge from a Deep pit of Melancholy"(K., 798). Blake's notion of despair was being entrapped and limited by one's selfhood. Every being suffers from this despair, therefore his myth offers hope by describing the movement beyond these limitations, towards the Infinite. For Blake the progress of the soul could be measured by the growth of the Imagination. Only through

the mind could man's soul move beyond sense perception. Till this wider imagination can be developed man's existence remains fractured, for unable to perceive the truth, man fails to reach true self-consciousness or knowledge of his own identity.

Many traditions and cultures refer to the four-fold divisions of man and the cosmos. Zoroastrianism too sees man as made up of four parts. The vital or astral man, the psychological man, the ethical man and the spiritual man.²¹ Each individual contains these divisions within himself and when all exist in harmony the physical, psychological, ethical and spiritual are united in their aim of reaching a higher consciousness. Man falls from harmony whenever his four basic psychic energies or to use Blake's term "Zoas," divide or come into conflict. If one Zoa usurps control man becomes either a spectre--i.e. disembodied intellect--as under Urizen's rule, or a serpent like creature of perverted emotions, ruled by Luvah or passion. Life can be reduced to the vegetating physical bestiality of Tharmas's self-preserving instinct, or become like a hermaphrodite, the false union caused by the diseased imagination. Worst of all is the possibility of becoming a chaotic non-entity which, as Mellor says, symbolizes the psychological state of total schizophrenic disintegration.²²

Blake's Four Zoas, Urthona, Urizen, Luvah and Tharmas correspond to the Spirit (Imagination), the Head (Reason), the Heart (Passion) and the Loins (Instinct). In their original form they existed in total unity in the person of Albion, a perfect picture of the "universal man," whom Blake identifies with God. But in creation, which also implies an awakening of self-consciousness each Zoa divides, projects itself as an emanation, and then struggles to re-achieve unity. This can only come when man reintegrating his

psychic forces expands his imaginative vision and perceives the innate holiness of all life. These divisions of the Zoas have been codified by Max Plowman as the divisions of Night I being those of the loins, Night II of the heart, Night III of the Mind, Night IV of the Spirit. In Night V Orc is born of the divided spirit and its Emanation thus completing the Fall. In Night VI the mind tries through Reason to form a web of Religion, while in Night VII we enter the world of the Fall according to Genesis. In Night VIII Evil becomes materialized and results in the crucifixion. Night IX is that of the Last Judgment when unity comes and Albion is raised from the dead.²³ On the other hand, many have felt that the poem exists without a context, its mythology being presented without any explanation, the entire work reducing itself to certain powerful scenes, the closest codification possible being that of the dream narrative.²⁴

While the title itself was changed and over-written, the design on the title page of *Vala or the Four Zoas* is an indicator of the theme, for a Gabriel-like figure blows his trumpet and the dead awaken, raising up their heads in a drawing similar to Night II of Young's *Night Thoughts*, and also repeated as the title page of Blair's *The Grave*. The motto "Rest Before Labour" suggests that Albion's sleep is a gathering together of his forces for the "Intellectual Battle" that is every man's proper activity. In Albion is the potential to achieve full self-consciousness and true vision--the four-fold vision which was Blake's own aim in all his writing. Kerrison Preston links this with *The Four Zoas* in an important passage:

Single vision belongs to Urizen, who sees primarily the material form . . .
Luvah adds the emotions of the heart . . . giving an added meaning to

form which is the double vision of the artist . . . Tharmas contributes the universality of the senses . . . all earthly and bodily feeling which Blake calls Beulah, the three fold vision. All this is raised to Four-fold vision by Urthona, the prophetic imagination where the pure in heart shall see God.²⁵

While the four divisions of the *Denkart* myth are clear-cut in Blake's final epic *Jerusalem*, in *The Four Zoas* the issue of doubt leading to Division occurs not just at the start of the myth but throughout the Nights. Similarly, the issue of illumination and the re-unification of the universal man occurs not at one climatic point, but in stages. It seems as if here Blake was still trying to formulate a pattern. Night I beginning with the division of Tharmas, "Parent power" and the lament of the Earth mother reveals a time when:

All Love is lost: Terror succeeds & Hatred instead of love.

(l:36, K., 265)

"Seas of Doubt & rocks of Repentance"(l.1.114) overwhelm Enion as she draws out the spectre from Tharmas. The pain engendered by this division creates yet another division for her "sorrow" and "woe" find form in the two infants Los and Enitharmon who in the divided perverted world embody "Hate" and "Scorn & Jealousy" instead of being the true embodiments of the Imagination and the Instinct. The first Night is then about the crippling of instinct and the imagination which becomes symbolic of human fragmentation.²⁶ In the opening of his epic itself Blake conveys the disastrous effect of division on these two faculties through which we not only perceive our world, but which also give us our identity. The degradation of Los is particularly frightening, for the imagination is ultimately the only mode of human salvation.

Los and Enitharmon's ill-considered acts lead to self-injury and can be taken as an

expression of the random disintegration of the human psyche. The behaviour of this pair, who should be representative of the highest creation has a definite echo to the story of Mashya and Mashyoi, the first human couple in Zoroastrian myth. This pair, meant to represent the perfection of human creation, became corrupted. Ahura Mazda had charged them to remember "You are man, you are the ancestry of the world, and you are created perfection in devotion . . . " but corrupted by evil "They went forth into the wilderness, came to a white-haired goat and milked the milk . . . they came to a sheep and slaughtered it . . . and carried on unnatural malice between themselves."²⁷ Blake's couple also:

liv'd among the forests

Snaring the wild goats for their milk, they eat the flesh of Lambs:

Alternate Love and Hate his breast: hers scorn & Jealousy.

(NI, 11.232-37, K., 270)

We see that as in the *Denkart* myth the struggle is not against physical enemies but against those powers of darkness which degrade the imagination and undermine the integrated nature of man's being. Los-Unthona seems unlikely to appear as hero of the epic after this start to the story, but Blake is highlighting the problems which this Zoa has to overcome, for his fragmentation and corruption are paralleled by that of Albion and each human individual in the struggle of life.

The jealousy and strife between Los and Enitharmon is part of the tension between Tharmas and Enion, "parent" powers of the Universe. Sexual jealousy, attraction and repulsion and a blurred emotional state mark their loss of unitary being. As this, the most primeval relationship, disintegrates due to doubts regarding each other, their conversation ceases to be a dialogue, becoming instead a "parallel monologue,"²⁸

The ancient Iranians believed that the sky was a hard substance of ruby or luminous crystal, or metallic, a huge round shell enclosing all within. Its purpose was two-fold, to protect material creation and entrap Ahriman. Only one rampart was even stronger than the sky, that of "righteous understanding." Together, material sky and mental strength have to work against evil:

He [The Sky] arranged the guardian spirits of the righteous who are warriors around that rampart . . . in such manner as the hair on the head.³¹

The Mundane Shell of Night II has a similar role. Representing the coating of matter over everything, occasionally as in the Zoroastrian texts, it is symbolized as the sky itself. Even Urizen is terrified of non-existence and the Mundane Shell becomes the limit fixed to the Fall. "Urizen, who was Faith and certainty is changed to Doubt"(II.1.105 K., 282) says Luvah, and as Luvah divides from Vala, Urizen separates from Ahania. On what was originally the third sheet of the Vala ms, we find an actual depiction of such a separation where the warm living flesh--a female figure--separates, leaving behind a skeleton or spectre-like being whose mind alone seems animate and whose body is reduced to a heap of dry bones (see plate 93).³² Doubts lead to division "two wills they had, two intellects," but Los and Enitharmon aim at planting even more "divisions in the soul"(1.239). The false values of the divided world form Enion's song of lament:

I have planted a false oath in the earth: it has brought forth a poison tree
I have chosen the serpent for a councillor & the dog
For a schoolmaster to my children . . .

[illegible]

I have taught the thief a secret path into the house of the just
 I have taught pale artifice to spread his nets upon the morning.

This is the world of experience, of what one must suffer before regeneration, but the hope that underlies *The Four Zoas* is of wisdom born of suffering:

What is the price of Experience? do men buy it for a Song?
 or Wisdom for a dance in the street? No, it is bought with the price
 Of all that a man hath, his house, his wife, his children
 Wisdom is sold in the desolate market where none come to buy.
 and in the wither'd field, where the farmer plows for bread in vain.

(II.11.388-401 K., 290)

Ahania-pleasure, can never rest again after hearing the bitterness of this song, and Night II becomes the story of the division caused by the conflict between Luvah and Urizen, Desire and Restraint. Doubts and frustration in both these elements of the psyche confuse Albion as he lies in a stupor. Realising his integrated self has been lost, in a desperate attempt, he begins to rely increasingly on his rational powers. Ironically, he is only increasing the void within for he is thereby losing his instinctively felt Divine Vision. A tearing apart of the psyche is depicted, for Urizen's attempt to enforce reason is the typical psychology of coping with a mental crisis. But Albion has to strive for self-knowledge. In the Zoroastrian myth too, only after achieving self-awareness can regeneration begin, and self-knowledge is impossible in a divided psyche. Here even Urizen is shaken by the divisions for Luvah has deteriorated from love to the Vala-like state of unprincipled lust.

Only Albion's true emanation Jerusalem remains pure, like the Zoroastrian Daena, who despite all the sins of and against the body, remains unsullied. Jerusalem is directly

opposed to the false ambitions of Vala, the physical side of femininity, who in her sadistic desire for dominance is an image of sexual desire without love; innocence perverted to manipulation and repression. Vala is paralleled by female spirits of evil popular in Zoroastrian mythology. Nasus, the demon of Decay is regarded "of all devs . . . the most bold, continuously polluting and fraudulent," and described as a hideous mottled fly,³³ while the Zurvanite Az is the principle of disorder, excess and deficiency as opposed to the ideal of the Mean. Az stands for desire, hunger and thirst as much as concupiscence, and only in the last days of the earth when mankind gives up food and drink, to enter the life of the spirit, will humanity become independent of her power. As a weapon used by Ahriman, she will finally turn on the devil himself and in the original Zurvan myth, Az is ultimately destroyed by Zurvan in a final conquest of the original seed of corruption that was his Doubt.

Az also stands for "ignorance" and "wrong-mindedness,"³⁴ therefore attacking both mind and body, bringing decay to the latter while creating divisions between responsible human intellect and the passions. The ugly description of Az seems to fit in with the illustration on Ms. p. 26, which depicts Vala as a hideous figure, representative of the horrors of sexuality without compassion, self-control or love (see plate 94).³⁵ Although Vala rejects Luvah, even she cannot survive in the world of Ulro and becomes:

a heap of Ashes

Beneath the furnaces, a woful heap in living Death.

(II.11.115-16 K., 283)

As the narrative of Night II veers between the tortured perceptions of passion and the world of pure reason we see how inadequate both these states of error are in the ultimate

analysis. Only one hope remains, that love will survive, for Jesus assuming Luvah's role
 "Walked in robes of blood till he who slept should awake"(1.265, K., 287).

In Night III the action moves much faster, the divisions too are clear cut. Ahania, Urizen's consort attempts to comfort her Lord by recommending trust in the Eternal one, and relates her vision of the divided Albion.

Rent from Eternal Brotherhood we die & are no more

(III.1.76 K., 293)

At this, Urizen turns upon Pleasure itself and casts Ahania away. The resulting division and confusion affects the entire universe and clouds, darkness and tumult accompany the freezing of Urizen as he casts off his warm comforter:

To cast Ahania to the Earth: he seiz'd her by the hair

And threw her from the steps of ice that froze around his throne.

Saying "Art thou also become like Vala? thus I cast thee out."

(III. 11.111-13, K., 294-95)

The cold and ice of the Zoroastrian hell is reflected in freezing of Urizen's feelings and chaos comes upon the earth:

The bounds of Destiny were broken

The bounds of Destiny crash'd direful, & the swelling sea

Burst from its bonds in whirlpools fierce.

(III.11.135-37 K., 295)

Echoes from Zoroastrian myth link this to the assault of the evil spirit when mountains sprang up from the tortured earth, and torrential rains fell and divided all into seven regions or "keshvars." The world will remain thus divided, till at the renewal all divisions cease. From this tumult emerges the human form of Tharmas the Body which is materialized at last. This materialization out of pain and chaos echoes Persian cosmogony for the birth is not in gentleness and joy but in "bursting, sobbing, deep despairing"(1.156, *K.*, 296), a struggle to put together the results of destruction, a "skull riven into filaments," and "limbs of fury." The mind totally separates from the body and Enion, the instincts, cannot survive. She becomes a mere pleading voice her "fading lineaments" and "melting . . . shower of falling tears" making her "substanceless, voiceless weeping, vanish'd"(1.201, *K.*, 297). As Enion, and Ahania are expelled, the Zoas constrict further, the human psyche fragments almost to non-existence. Dramatically and psychologically Night III has a greater impact than the earlier episodes for there is a single continuous action; a headlong descent. Urizen's perversity at casting away charm, grace and wisdom, destroys whatever could have made for happiness (see plate 95)³⁶ and because a mind rejecting all happiness cannot survive we watch a collapse at the end of Night III into the "indefinite" world of "non-Entity."

Night IV brings the faint possibility of a reconstruction. Tharmas finds his divided existence a torture and knows that rebuilding will be an agonizing effort;

I reunite in endless torment.

(IV.1.15, *K.*, 298)

Vasa

Night & Day

[illegible]

but an easy death is unavailable. In pain he calls upon Los to rebuild "a universe of Death and Decay" in this divided existence. Los indignantly pledges allegiance to Urizen and as the Zoas turn on each other Tharmas, wrathful and determined to awaken Los to his responsibility removes his emanation Enitharmon. The division of Los from his inspiration is described graphically:

O how Los howl'd at the rending asunder! All the fibres rent
Where Enitharmon join'd to his left side, in grinding pain
He falling on the rocks, bellow'd his dolor till the blood
Stanch'd: then in ululation wail'd his woes upon the wind.

(IV.1.59-62, K., 299)

Without inspiration Los has become a spectre "a shadow blue, obscure and dismal"(1.65). But this terrible separation brings with it the wisdom of pain and experience, for the spectre remembers its fall from the original form of Urthona, while Tharmas recalls that Spirit which was once his protector. Tharmas returns Enitharmon to Los with the command that Los use his inspiration and the knowledge gained from division and pain to rebuild a universe of Poetry. Los has now been allotted his task, he must work to limit Urizen and bind him into a materialized form and then take up his own true role as Creator, Poet and Prophet. He has to recreate the furnaces:

Enormous work, he builded them anew
Labour of Ages in the Darkness.

(IV.11:166-67 K., 301)

The struggle thereafter becomes the combat between fire and ice. Los "heated his furnaces" to combat Urizen's "fettters of ice"(K., 303) and as Urizen is formed, the limits of the Fall are finally set. A promise of the resurrection comes with the Saviour who

requires Belief as the final weapon with which to combat the Doubt that started the division of the Zoas:

*If ye will Believe, your Brother shall rise again
 And first he found the limit of Opacity, & nam'd it Satan
 In Albion's bosom, for in every human bosom these limits stand.
 And next he found the limit of Contraction, & nam'd it Adam.
 While yet those beings were not born nor knew of Good and Evil.*

(IV.11.270-74 K., 304)

But Los has not escaped the taint of Urizenic evil and is now himself bound in fetters which he must destroy in order to complete his task.

Nights IV, V, and VI forming the middle of the epic are the Nights of response to the divisions of Albion and the Zoas. In Night IV instinct and imagination begin to put a limit to the fall while in Night V passion and in Night VI reason itself are seen in their responses to the situation. Night IV is not as clear cut as was Night III but its psychological situation is that of the nadir of existence. When all seems lost only an upward movement is possible. Tharmas, Instinct, has moved from a despairing death-wish to anger at the perversion of the life-force. But Tharmas's own promise of creation is a negative force and therefore Los, the imagination must keep its distance. At the end of Night IV the important point is that all the Zoas and emanations have come into being. Each Zoa in rejecting his emanation has treated the most intimate portion of himself as alien and only the intervention of Jesus creates sympathy and an acceptance of suffering.

The sympathy now seen in both Tharmas and Los are intimations of hope and salvation.

Night V describes a birth, which is also a division but nonetheless brings about a new, hopeful creation--the birth of Orc who stands for revolt. Son of Los and Enitharmon, his father still under Urizenic influences, binds him down out of jealousy. Only Enitharmon holds on to faith in her child for even when chained, Orc's influence affects the whole universe. Orc's character stresses the role of fire in regeneration for fire renews his strength:

His limbs bound down mock at his chains, for over them a flame
Of circling fire unceasing plays, to feed them with life and bring
The virtues of the Eternal worlds.

(V.11.114-16 K., 308)

When repentance overcomes Los it is too late, for the chain of jealousy has become part of the foundation of the earth itself. Psychologically this is the moment when the mother, suffering greatest guilt:

Felt the inmost gate
Of her bright heart burst open and again close with a deadly pain.
Within her heart Vala began to reanimate in bursting sobs.

(V.11.177-79 K., 309)

Vala is reborn as physical nature and Urizen at the end of Night V laments his imprisonment, hoping for release through Orc. Imprisonment has led Urizen to introspection and the realisation that it is his own failure and division that has led to this tragic moment. Now even he hopes for salvation, for "When thought is clos'd in Caves, Then love shall show its root in deepest Hell"(1.241 K., 311).

Tharmas disappears from the poem after Night V for the role of Saviour has been handed over by the Instinct to the Imagination. The battle of *Vala or The Four Zoas* is fought and won not with the body and physical attributes but with the mind and therefore Los and Enitharmon now command centre-stage. The change in the couple from the self-centred youth and female of the early Nights to the role of parents, creators of a new order is a proof of the values of adversity. The jealousy that the father experiences is part of the jealousy of the world, only later will it be annihilated, but the mother learns the power of sympathy through the sufferings of her child. She also realises her essential affinity with all other suffering woman-kind, an unselfishness that will finally bring about redemption. It is this seed of selflessness planted in both through suffering, that will enable Los in Night VII A to see and teach Enitharmon to see the Lamb of God within. Thus in Night V Los has taken on the major role; imagination has been set to work and there is no longer a void of non-entity facing the Zoas, but the tangible task of recreating the Universe. That the imagination separated from the mind and other emotions is inadequate is obvious in the treatment of Orc. Jealousy for Blake was the main source of evil in human relationships but in Los's own suffering at this act lies the source of his creative power, for all art and in particular romantic art is born out of suffering.

If we are to trace the developments in *Vala or The Four Zoas* according to *The Denkart* myth, by Night VI we see that the divisions are mainly complete, and with Los's realisation of his creative task, illumination has begun. The Zoas have been divided, the nadir passed in Night VI where Urizen rises from his lamentation to explore his universe.

His own creations shrink away in horror from him, even his daughters "drove him back with storms"(VI i.6 K., 311). Urizen's journey "Thro' the pathless world of death"(1.84, K., 314) is a description of a hell very similar to that described in the Persian myths. There the worst punishment is the belief that one stands alone in "The cold, dry, stony and dark interior," where "if they inflict the punishment of a thousand men within a single span, they think in this way, that they are alone, and the loneliness is worse than its punishment."³⁷ The Urizenic world too is "an earth of wintry woe" filled with "pestilential plagues" where each man is alone for:

Beyond the bounds of their own self their senses cannot penetrate
 As the tree knows not what is outside of its leaves and bark
 And yet it drinks the summer joy & fears the winter sorrow,
 So, in the regions of the grave, none knows his dark compeer
 Tho' he partakes of his dire woes & mutual returns the pang,
 The throb, the dolor, the convulsion, in soul-sickening woes.

(VI.11.94-99 K., 314)

Men have sunk below the human form into the forms of Tygers, lions, serpents, worms and monsters, Urizen's voice is only inarticulate thunder; no longer is there communication between all aspects of creation as there was in "happy Eternity"

Where the lamb replies to the infant voice, & the lion to the man of
 years.

(VI.11.135-36 K., 315)

Though Urizen repents his curses he cannot change the disasters that have overtaken the elements and the descent continues till the Divine hand "ever pitying" creates a bosom of clay to check Urizen's fall. Here Urizen tries to recreate with his

Books of Law "another world better suited to obey His will"(1.231 K., 317) and finally he fixes his position by a net woven like a spider's web "growing from his soul," beneath which the good creation shrinks away even further.

Urizen wanders into the west, realm of the Body, then the north, hearing wherever he goes the cries of Orc. His explorations, instead of being positive signs of energy and life are only the consolidation of error. In his rejection of his daughters he has rejected the world of nature and these three, Ahania's once gentle offspring and the graces of mental pleasures, have themselves become perverted and jealous. At the end of Night VI Urizen is antagonistic towards everyone and everything outside himself. While Urizen seems unredeemable a full-page drawing separating Night VI from VII A offers a hope at the end of this part of the poem. It is a Christ or Orc like figure, whose pose and outspread arms and legs remind us of the promise of "Albion rose"(Glad Day). This seems to be an indication that the reawakening of Albion, promised at the beginning of the poem, though delayed, is definitely going to occur.

Two versions of Night VII exist, both link VI with VIII, but each contains differing episodes and Blake never succeeded in combining the two different versions. The first begins with Urizen's returning to attack the realms of spirit. As he descends to the caves of Orc he watches the tortured youth and composes his Book of War. At the same time around him springs up the Tree of Mystery which like a banyan tree has branches that "Take root again where ever they touch"(1.34 K 321). Amazed by Orc's ability to "laugh at all these tortures"(1.59) Urizen demands to know what "vision of

delight" can sustain him. Orc replies with scorn but this leaves Urizen unmoved for he determines to convert revolt to his way of thinking.

Urizen's Book of Brass reveals utter hypocrisy; it is a powerful display of the will to power "Magnify small gifts; reduce the man to want a gift and then give with pomp,"(1.124, K., 323), the psychology by which tyrants control mankind:

Reduce all to our will, as spaniels are taught with art.

(1.129 K., 323)

Orc now becomes the positive response of struggling humanity. Refusing to accept this hypocrisy, he declares "The Man shall rage, bound with this chain, the worm in silence creep"(1.143). However Urizen's power is such, that furious yet helpless and unable to break his bonds, Orc himself begins to turn into the serpent of hypocrisy.

Meanwhile Los remains a spectre without Enitharmon, now reduced to a shadow. The story that unfolds is the re-enactment of the Fall of Genesis, as Enitharmon relates her vision of the birth of Urizen "First born of generation"(1.245 K 326), Vala's division, and the wars of Luvah and Urizen that caused the Fall. Los meanwhile relating the story of Urthona's division tells us of their own birth from out of Enion. Zoroastrianism has always stressed the necessity of the Good Mind married to the strong and pure Body and in the illumination that comes in Night VII this is what Los has to realise and act upon. Even as the spectre tries to overwhelm Los by false teachings, claiming that divisions can never be restored, Los who has already felt his perceptions widen wants to encompass the spectre into himself. He now knows that only a reversal of the previous divisions can re-create the world and while Enitharmon is still not re-absorbed into his consciousness, Los and his Spectre now united begin building the City of Art, which will result in the re-

creation of the universe in an ideal form.

The re-uniting of Los and his spectre is the coming of true consciousness. Just as Ohrmazd had to come to know himself as he truly was, so too Los has to recognize the spectre as part of himself. It is an act of maturity to see one's faults, and by facing the truth and uniting with his spectre Los turns decisively towards reintegration and enlightenment. The spectre is dehumanized man, for to use Plowman's words "Man becomes a spectre when his feelings are in the brain."³⁸ The spectre exhibited its loss of humanity because of its loss of physical attributes; the negation of any part of man is error, which Los now realising, redeems:

If we unite in one, another better world will be
Open'd within your heart & loins & wondrous brain
Threefold, as it was in Eternity, & this the fourth Universe,
Will be Renew'd by the three & consummated in Mental fires.

(VII.11:352-56 K., 329)

As Golgonooza is built we see the opening of "new heavens & a new Earth beneath"(1.380 K., 329). But Enitharmon returns from the Tree of Mystery and Eve-like tells Los that having eaten of its fruit, she knows she is damned for her sins; if Los too will eat and gain knowledge of good and evil he may guide them to eternity. Los having eaten gives in to eternal despair as a result of accepting the false doctrine of Eternal good and evil.

While Christianity preaches a definite Hell and eternal damnation for the wicked in Zoroastrian cosmogony evil is finally vanquished and made non-existent. Here Blake's rejection of good and evil as permanent states links him again with Zoroastrian

beliefs as does his stress on "six thousand years of self-denial & bitter contrition"(1.400 K., 330). The emphasis on the lack of spirituality in the spectre "Each male form'd without a counterpart, without a centering vision," also seems to relate to the role of the Daena, the female guiding spirit, or the visionary capacity, who exists at the heart of all the Good Creation. The Daena or the spiritual counterpart is the ultimate guide across the Bridge of the Separator, and Urthoma's spectre seems to recall this feature as he mourns:

These spectres have no [counterparts], therefore they ravin
Without the food of life. Let us create them coun [terparts]
For without a Created body the Spectre is Eternal Death.

(VII.11.408-10 K., 330)

Los comforts Enitharmon and working on his immortal task succeeds in isolating Urizen's spectre. He now has his enemy under his power but such is the power of creativity that he "felt love not hate"(1.497, K., 332). The imaginative task of creating a new universe has taught Los and Enitharmon how to sacrifice themselves, not their children or others. Earlier they had selfishly sacrificed Orc to their own jealousies, now a widened experience and imaginative perception allows them to view even their enemies with care and concern.

The second version of Night VII, stresses the triumph of Urizen's "secret religion" but his cruelties are opposed by Los and Tharmas, the Poet and the Body opposing the restricting mind. Orc breaks loose but he is no longer only the Spirit of Revolt, he now

represents war and as he embraces his "shadowy Female" war enters the created world. Blake's long invective against the military and industrial exploitation of human labour which follows is a broadening of a scope of this poem from the personal and psychological to the social evils of his own and of all time. Redemption through faith is however promised in the words Jesus used at the resurrection of Lazarus: "If ye will believe your Brother shall rise again"(VII(b).1.293. K., 340). At this climatic point Satan himself appears.

Night VIII gathers together all the errors that have been seen in the earlier books but brings together in order to save for only when error is embodied and recognised can it be destroyed. Albion begins to awaken while the Saviour appears to Los and Enitharmon. In this Night there are sharply drawn extremes, the forges and looms of Los and Enitharmon create, while the instruments of Urizen and Rahab attempt to destroy. Jesus and Jerusalem are embodiments of redemption through self-sacrifice while Satan in his selfhood represents total error. Here Jesus as Luvah is crucified but to create new life. The opening illustration brings fallen man back into the action for though he lies "wash'd with tides pale, overgrown with weeds"(1.5 K., 341) two protective fravashi-like figures are present to guard and guide him:

Hovering high over his head

Two winged immortal shapes, one standing at his feet

Towards the East, one standing at his head towards the West.

(VIII 11:6-8 K., 341)

Jesus has come with a promise of hope and as he confronts Urizen, Satan, Hermaphrodite of the contradiction which is Doubt, clashes directly with the representative of Faith. Urizen beholds the entire false basis of his philosophy and finds "Himself tangled in his own net, in sorrow, lust, repentance"(1.181 *K.*, 345), while Enitharmon creates "Jerusalem the holy . . . the Divine vision seen within the inmost deep recess . . . a gently beaming fire"(11.190-93 *K.*, 346).

Jerusalem, like the Daena, is the emanation that proceeds from the Divine Essence, representing the soul's perception of God. In contrast to this pure Being stands the Az-like Rahab, evil and self-destructive weaving "webs of torture, mantles of despair . . . veils of ignorance"(*K.*, 346). Rahab as mystery stands for the hypocrisy of a religion of externals and ceremonies; of a remote God who may be approached only through a mediator, offering absolution in return for obedience. The true God for Blake is Jerusalem who abides in every man, the false God alone is elusive and unapproachable. Blake's Satan, like Ahriman lacks a spiritual aspect:

A male without a female counterpart, a howling fiend

Forlorn of Eden & repugnant to the forms of life.

(VIII 1.253-54 *K.*, 347)

In the spiritual warfare of this section the Lamb of God captured by Satan, is convicted by Rahab and crucified, as Jerusalem flees. Los preserves the body in an edifice which brings to mind the great sepulchres of Naqsh-i-Rustam;

The sepulcher which Los had hewn in the rock of Eternity for himself.

(11.339-40 *K.*, 349)

Rahab fails to realise that death is the triumph of Jesus for through it His Divinity is

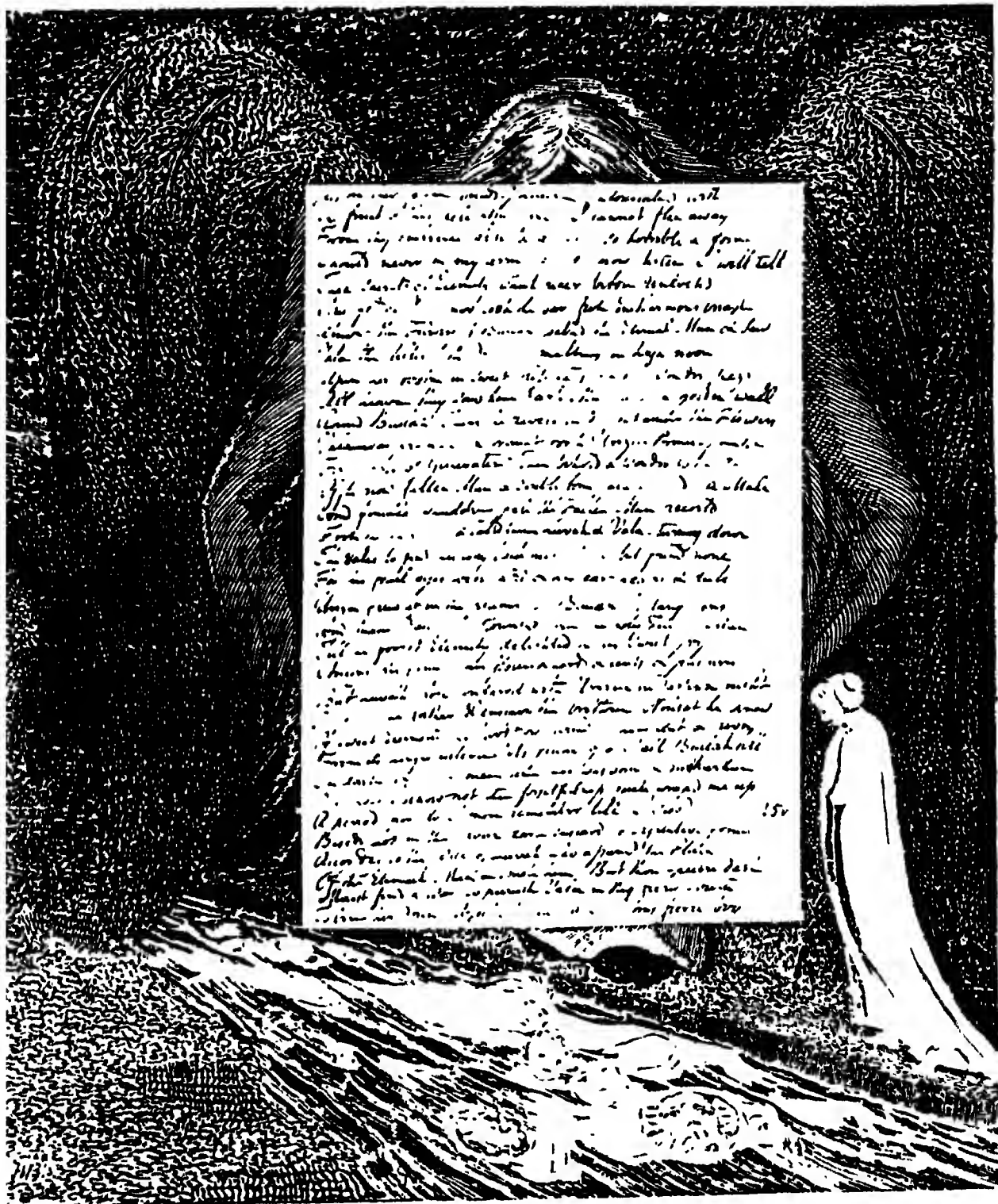
disclosed. But Los accepts now that Satan can never be redeemed, and Urizen sinks further into his net to become a dragon, clothed in the fish scales of corruption. Tharmas and Urthona come to aid Los and even while Ahania continues her lament, Enlon visualizes a world perfected and renewed "When the mortal disappears in improved knowledge"(1.552 K., 355). Finally with "Satan divided against Satan"(1.615 K., 357), the Last Judgment is near at hand and as in the *Bundahishn* the interconnectedness of all life is stressed:

Wherever a grass grows

Or a leaf buds, the Eternal Man is seen, is heard, is felt.

(VIII 11.581-82 K., 356)

Thus the spiritual awakening of Albion, the unified human race, is to be seen not merely as the uniting of all the aspects of the mind and body but also a reconciliation within external nature. With this regeneration the whole earth will be renewed and recreated. This, the promise of Zoroastrianism is echoed by Blake at the conclusion of the myth. In Night IX Jesus appears to Los and Enitharmon, separating their spirit from the body. This "death" they regard as annihilation and in his terror Los destroys the material sun and moon. The fires of Eternity are now free to descend and consume the world of matter. A trumpet sounds to call all to Judgment. There is terrible confusion as earthly tyranny is destroyed and Albion lamenting, calls upon Urizen to restore order. But Urizen has resigned control and freed from the burden of life springs into eternity in his original youthful form. As the Mundane Shell explodes all souls are set free and the throne of Heaven appears surrounded by the Four and Twenty elders and the Four Zoas. Six days pass in the harvesting and vintage of nations to make the Bread and Wine of Eternity while all refuse is cast away in the spiritual purging of the apocalypse. Orc is



burnt out, Ahania, Enion, Luvah, and Vala restored to their glory and as Los comes back to his original form of Urthona, peace overtakes all.

It is in the conclusion of the myth of creation that Blake comes closest to Zoroastrianism. While Christianity accepted hell-fires and a final judgment which would end with the condemnation of much of the world, Blake like Zoroaster, saw a unified, cleansed world, re-created perfect. As in Blake's myth where Albion must awaken it is with the rousing of Gayomard, the first man, that the Zoroastrian rebirth begins and all material beings once again assume their own forms. At a great assembly every individual will stand and see his own good deeds and his own evil deeds and "a wicked man becomes as conspicuous as a white sheep among those which are black." Three days and nights of punishment follow for the wicked after which comes the ordeal of molten metal which:

Remains on this earth like a river. Then all men will pass into that melted metal and will become pure; when one is righteous, then it seems to him just as though he walks continually in warm milk; but when wicked, then it seems to him in such manner, as though in the world he walks continually in melted metal.

(See plate 96)

At the end of this, all families come together in unity "all men become one voice and administer loud praise to Auharmazd and the archangels." Ahriman disappears back to gloom and darkness, hell is destroyed and the earth becomes "an iceless, slopeless, plain."³⁹

In the *Gathas* there is no concept of original sin and eternal condemnation. After having suffered, the soul will have revealed to it another vista of progress. Spiritual renewal begins at the moment of consciousness and all should aim at Garo-Damana, the Abode of Heavenly Light and Song, where Ahura Mazda dwells in the Abode of the Good Mind. As in Blake, Heaven and Hell are states to be reached or avoided by the correct application of one's own mental powers. Once the soul is alienated from the consciousness of Eternal truth it has to suffer till, achieving true self-consciousness, it unites with Truth and Righteousness. No man is punished eternally for sins committed in time. No one is finally condemned for the Pahlavi texts emphasize Justice tempered with mercy:

The rule is this, that thou shouldst not consider any one hopeless of heaven . . . because there is nothing which is a sin in my religion for which there is no retribution.⁴⁰

It is this ideal of the re-creation of unity that Blake stresses in the final night of *Vala or The Four Zoas*, as is also the very Zoroastrian emphasis on harmony not uniformity in creation. Although Blake believed strongly in the unity of life he could not regard with pleasure an after-life in which the individuality of man was lost or merged into a great impersonal One. As in Zoroastrianism, Blake never gave up his belief in the importance of personal identity. Zoroastrianism does not look for the loss of the many into one fountainhead, but seeks for the individual existence of the many as a unity of being. The world that is being re-created is the new world of innocence. It is no longer the childlike innocence of ignorance but the higher innocence that comes to wisdom after experience. The new world is a combination of Tharmas, the body, and Urthona, the spirit or imagination. Once this balance is achieved illumination is not far behind.

Parallels between Blake's creation myth and those of Zoroastrianism abound and range from the shaking of the earth, when all hills collapse in the *Bundahisn*, to the awakening of the sleeping dead, physically and mentally:

With thunderous noise & dreadful shakings

The heavens are shaken & the Earth removed from its place

The foundations of the Eternal Hills are discover'd.

(IX 11.15-17 K., 357)

... Start forth the trembling millions into flames of mental fire,

Bathing their limbs in the bright Visions of Eternity.

(11.44-45 K., 358)

Purifying flames destroy the "Synagogue of Satan" while flames of consummation destroy tyranny. Both myths stress that only with the restoration of equilibrium and harmony can the eternal world be renewed. Once the balance of the Four Zoas is restored life will regain proportion. The forms will remain differentiated "The male & female live the life of Eternity"(1.219) as they do in the Zoroastrian texts.

Another similarity is the re-creation of the perfected form before the final renovation. In Night VIII the question is asked: "When shall the dead revive? Can that which has existed cease, or can love & life expire?"(VIII:170 K., 345). In Blake's text "Rattling bones, to bones Join . . ." and "Everyone of the dead appears as he had liv'd before." In the *Bundahisn* too we hear Zoroaster asking Ahura Mazda "Whence does a body form again, which the wind has carried and the water conveyed? And how does the resurrection occur?" Auhramazd answers thus:

When through me the sky arose, . . . when through me the earth arose which bore the material life . . . when by me a son was created . . . in the womb of a mother . . . and the structure severally of the skin, nails, blood, feet, eyes, ears was produced each one of them when created by me . . . was herein more difficult than causing the resurrection. Observe that when that which was not was then produced, why it is not possible to produce again that which was? For at that time one will demand the bone from the Spirit of Earth, the blood from the water, the hair from the plants and the life from fire, since they were delivered to them in the original creation.⁴¹

Blake's flames of re-creation "roll on" like the river of Molten metal of the Frashokereti and the Fallen man rises "walking thro' the flames To meet the Lord coming to Judgment"(11.287-88, K., 364). Just as the individual soul in Zoroastrianism comes to judgment in the dawn of the third day after death so Vala finds "the spirit of the morning awaking the soul from its grassy bed"(1.394 K., 367) and "morning dew" brings healing and renewal. The illumination that comes with the Feast of Eternity reminds us of the last sacrifice in Zoroastrianism when the Soshyans (Saviour) prepares Haoma juice--the elixir of immortality, for all mankind, and finally we have the message taught by all religions. It is the need to cast away selfhood, accept universal brotherhood, and unite divided being. Blake presents a well worn moral but it is none the less powerful.

With illumination comes freedom, the freeing of the mind from its fetters is paralleled by the freedom of slaves from their bondage. The "African Black" discovers himself free and perfect, "Methinks I am as I was in my youth"(1.688 K., 375), "Winter is over and gone"(1.798 K., 378), in both myths while at the end of the trial by fire the world is one and all divisions, mental as well as physical are past and a true unity--that of the Divine Vision--has been achieved:

The Sun has left his blackness & has found a fresher morning
 And the mild moon rejoices in the clear and cloudless night.
 And the man walks forth from the midst of the fires: the evil is all
 consum'd.
 The Expanding Eyes of Man behold the depths of wondrous worlds.
 One Earth, one Sea beneath . . . & one Sun . . . Issues with Songs & joy.
 He walks upon the Eternal Mountains, raising his heavenly voice.
 Conversing with the Animal forms of wisdom night and day.
 That, risen from the Sea of fire, renew'd walk o'er the Earth.
 . . . How is it we have walk'd Thro' fires & yet are not consum'd.
 How is it that all things are changed, even as in ancient times?

(XI.11.825-45 K., 379)

The answer to this final question is the story we have seen in the Persian myths and in Blake's *The Four Zoas*.

Vala or The Four Zoas has been examined here as a religious myth of man's division and re-creation. It can, of-course, be read in other ways. However, even an interpretation which sees that the divisions and sickness within the Eternal Man "parallels exactly a schizophrenic psychosis,"⁴² can fit into our pattern. Zoroastrianism and Blake both stress the mental divisions and the mental fires of renewal for finally religion and psychology both deal with the innermost being of man.

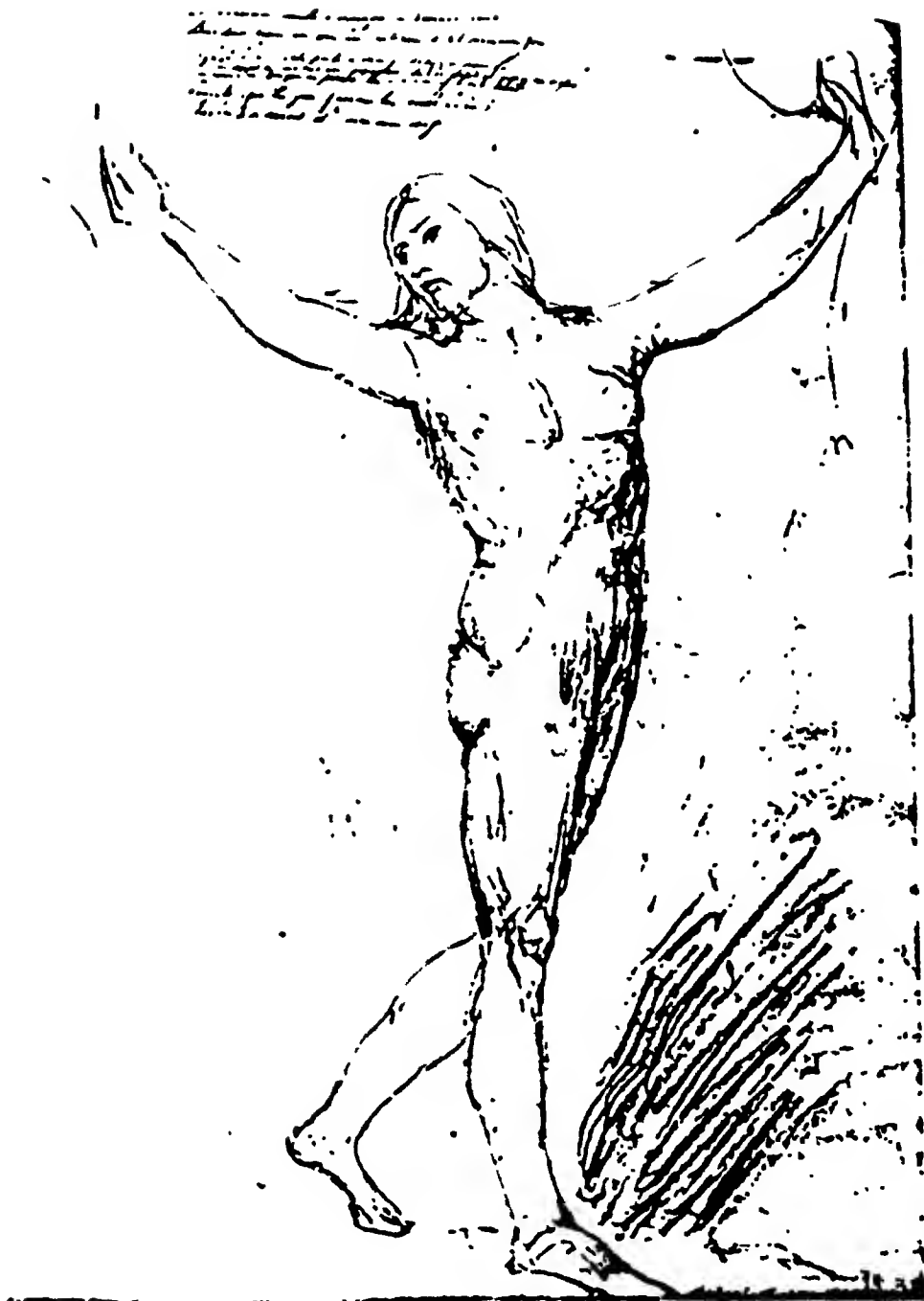
Before we conclude discussing *Vala or The Four Zoas* two more illustrations should be considered. While most of the sketches of *The Four Zoas* show monstrous

creatures; and many stress a physical sexuality, showing the grotesque eroticism of love in the fallen world, towards the end of Night IX on Plate 53 we see a loving, gentle, bearded man whose face appears in the midst of fravashi-like wings. It is very likely that he represents the "Eternal Man" the face of the resurrected Albion, or the Christ who blesses the coming apocalypse (see plate 97).⁴³ The peacefulness, love and concern on this face stand out in sharp contrast to all the earlier faces of painful passion and hideous contorted figures, while its appearance as a guardian spirit emphasizes its links with the winged Zoroastrian guardian the Fravashi with whom Blake was familiar. Its appearance of calm teaches us that man must remain secure in the knowledge that everything that lives will survive death through the loving care of God. Once the terrors are over man is reborn a Fravashi with a spiritual body, purified and at peace. Blake's Eternal man has here transcended the limitations of the human form, not by destroying the mortal body but by transforming his physical body into an illuminated form, a divinity; he has achieved an expansion into eternity. On the last page of Night VIII a human form, seemingly partaking of divinity is seen. It seems better suited to be the final illustration of *The Four Zoas* for a naked Christ stands celebrating "the human form divine"(IX 1.367 K., 366) with his arms open and raised in a triumphant gesture (see plate 98).⁴⁴ He seems to push aside clouds of doubt and walk triumphantly and confidently into a better world.

Part II: Milton

Milton has the simplest plan of Blake's three long works. The plates are exact halves of the plates of *Jerusalem* and the work is fifty pages long, half the hundred pages

[illegible]



Pl. 98

Vala.

of the final long poem. It divides into two Books as against the four chapters of the latter work. Initially, Blake planned a poem in Twelve Books but reduced it drastically to a direct "moment" of descent and ascent. Within this "moment" we have condensed the fourfold myth of Doubt, Division, Illumination and Unity and there is only one indication of a sub-plot, the familiar story of the bondage and freeing of Orc. *Milton* is perhaps the most personal document Blake has left us for in it events from Blake's life enter the text. It is also a poem in which the regeneration of Blake's world is close at hand, for according to his mythology, the six thousand years allotted to the created world were nearly finished and "the end approaches fast" (*M.23:55 K.*, 508).

Milton's pattern is simple, the misery of this world is a result of divisions and the process of denying the unity of all being. Therefore man's salvation will consist in seeking the original unity that existed in eternity. This one-ness of being can be achieved in two ways; Externally by empathy with others, the idea of universal brotherhood, and secondly, by man learning to truly know himself as in the Zurvan myth. Man must resolve all his doubts, for it is "Doubt which is Self-contradiction" (*K.*, 770) that caused the initial division of the soul. To achieve true harmony the second task is more essential, for only after achieving wholeness of being and knowing oneself can man find the key to the knowledge of others. Understanding and sympathy can only come with a true development of the Imagination because for total salvation Error must not only be overcome but also cast out. Errors, prohibitions and negations are the result of selfishness, and linked with Satan. To cast off Satan is to acquire Truth and rise beyond the narrow bonds of selfhood to universal Being. Each man enacts in miniature as the human race does collectively, this same spiritual history.

In *Milton* Blake again explores the nature of this world and human life, but his

exploration is linked with his personal experience as well as with mystical ideas. Psychological and literal facts combine with the warfare of personified forces as Blake's mental struggles are transformed into poetry. Blake had lived and suffered for three long years under the patronage of William Hayley, one of the better known poets of his day, constantly feeling himself to be a wise man under the fool's rod. Blake's constant dread was that in submitting to Hayley he was committing spiritual suicide. Finally his productions could no longer be restrained, he broke away from Hayley returning to a life of lesser physical comfort but one in which he could continue his visionary labours. "If a Man is the Enemy of my spiritual life while he pretends to be the Friend of my corporeal, he is a Real Enemy"(Letter to Butts, 25th April 1803 *K.*, 822) wrote Blake and *Milton* incorporates the issues that arose in Blake's mind because of this quarrel. Hayley was not an isolated phenomenon, he was a typical poetaster, who winning the applause of the world prevented the real artist from making his mark. Such men were the reason for the bad taste which pervaded the world, ever since Puritanism, suppressor of joy and beauty had dealt religion and art a blow from which they had yet to recover. The poet Milton, great as he was, had sinned by supporting Cromwell and his rigid absolutism, and while Milton influenced Blake greatly and can even be regarded as a spiritual father, there was a lot in the older poet that Blake found unacceptable. *Milton*, the poem, is constructed on the basis of a reformation of Milton's character, for according to Blake, Milton had put himself on the side of the repressive angels while he was in reality of the "Devil's party" and had exalted law and reason denying life-giving impulses and the body. Blake's self-imposed task was therefore to rescue Milton from that Puritan morality which had divided him from his true nature. For Blake the gap between Milton the great creative artist and his unhappy personal life, with its bitterness in the relationships with his wives and daughters, was evidence of his divided personality. In Blake's myth Milton had, like Urizen, driven away his six-fold female emanation and in doing so had committed the

same error as Puritanism, which in driving away all that it scorned as pleasure, had almost ruined an entire land and culture. To redeem his emanation and the finer aspects of himself Milton has to sacrifice his "selfhood," emerge from the cocoon of selfish individualism and expand mentally till he can absorb them all within himself again. Milton's redemption and the reunification of his divided self would therefore be emblematic of the reintegration of a divided culture.

In *The Four Zoas* the stress is on the fragmentation of a divided psyche, and minute divisions and subdivisions of each Zoa bewilder the reader, *Milton* follows a simpler pattern. It is a further development in Blake's plan, for it stresses the need to re-integrate the self in order to awaken the imagination--Milton's, Blake's and our own, so that we are brought one step closer to the full human potential of the divinity that is Jerusalem. Ordinary life limits such a dream while religion and art can be led astray by the errors of the intellect as was the case of Milton the poet. Milton must therefore return to earth to redeem his errors. Casting off rationalism he can release his human imagination and his salvation will be in microcosm, the salvation of Albion--all man--for Milton's myth will integrate with the entire mythology Blake had already constructed. For Blake, imaginative art and religious prophecy are both closely linked, the first leading to the second, higher state, therefore *Milton* and *Jerusalem* are complementary. Milton the poet has to fulfil a religious role while in *Jerusalem* we will see the culmination of the imaginative and the religious. Undoubtedly, both epics can be read in purely Christian terms yielding rich meaning. However, Blake's myth of mankind when situated in a universal context lends itself to various cultures and can be read as an example of his all embracing vision.

The poem opens with a summary of the action sung by a Bard in Eternity, and Milton listens to the story of the fall of Albion, the binding of Urizen, Los's bondage, the separation of his emanation, the birth of Orc and Satan and all mankind's woes. The illustration on the title-page immediately recalls the Christ-like figure of *The Four Zoas* (see plate 99).⁴⁵ But while Christ there triumphantly pushed aside the clouds of doubt here a similar figure representing the poet of the title pushes his way into clouds of billowing smoke. As he steps into frightening dark clouds determined to discover the truth and thereby "Justify the ways of god to man," he has shed all earthly garments. The theme of *Milton* is announced:

I will not cease from Mental Fight
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

(M 11:13-16, K., 481)

Seen by Hagstrum as a "Christian epic" the poem is the story of the restoration of lost perfection or in Blakean terms true innocence. Blake's undogmatic Christianity, however, permits ^a universal interpretation as a restoration that the poet can bring about by developing himself and his art to go beyond the self.⁴⁶

The Zoroastrian has always been a soldier of Truth, and the mission of the Prophet as a spiritual teacher was to make his followers acquire a pure mind, by battling the Lie. For the Zoroastrian the greatest battle is in the mind; once mental conflict is resolved and the polarity of opposites transcended, all humanity can live in harmony. In *The Gathas* the twin Divine attributes of Perfection and Immortality, Haurvatat and Ameretat, are the final goal of human existence, reached only when mental battles are



over and man has awakened God's Holy spirit within. *Milton* follows a similar pattern of thought. Book I begins with a description of the dead Milton "unhappy Tho' in heaven"(2:18 K., 481) viewing "in torment" his six-fold emanation, divided from him and "scatter'd Thro' the deep." For Blake Milton had been a man originally blessed with the Divine Imagination but one who became, "an Atheist, a mere politician busied about this world . . . till in his old age he returned back to God whom he had in his childhood."⁴⁷ Milton realising the error of his thinking had come to Blake:

I saw Milton in imagination and he told me to beware of being misled
by *Paradise Lost*.⁴⁸

The first movement of Book I falls into two parts, both of which involve re-workings of *Paradise Lost*, a new account of the Creation and the Fall and the quarrel of Satan and Palamabron. This last is a clash which focuses many issues of difference between Blake's values and those of the surrounding culture particularly his version of the quarrel with Hayley. Hayley is the dilettante usurping the place of the true artist, and by his fashionable false patronage perverting all creativity within his control. To Blake, Hayley and his type represented error masquerading as truth and were therefore guilty of hypocrisy in its most dangerous form. Palambron-Blake, the true artist opposes this Satanic perversion and the battle with Los and Rintrah occupies part of the poem leading up to Satan's triumph and the triumph of Puritanism.

Milton as we have just seen can be studied closely then for Blake's literary viewpoint, but it is in the cosmogony of his creation myth that both *Milton* and *Jerusalem* like *The Four Zoas* seems to echo the Zoroastrian myth of the world.
Hagstrum

emphasises the Christian aspect of Blake's two last epics, stressing that *Milton* interprets Christianity as self-annihilation and rebirth,⁴⁹ and one cannot but accept this reading. But Blake's appeal is such that while the Christian elements are unmistakably strong in all his writings, a further resonance emerges on viewing *Milton* in the pattern of the *Denkart* myth. This myth of the emergence of consciousness shows Ohrmazd groping for knowledge in much the same way as Milton, and like Him, Milton is led to recognize the Satan or doubt within his own creativity. Milton had not given true expression to his inspiration or emanations, the feminine portion of himself, for historically he had scorned his wives and daughters. Acknowledging these failures leads to divisions and descent; like Ohrmazd Milton's task is to cast out his error and integrate himself. False belief had destroyed the truth to the extent that:

Even till Jesus, the image of the Invisible God
Became its prey.

(M 2:11.12-13 K., 481)

The star which illumines the first page of *Milton* has light streaming down, its flame like rays remind us of the fires of Zoroastrianism, irradiating light but at the same time containing the power to consume and destroy error. Although the six human figures of this page seem listlessly asleep, the flames reaching downwards from the star carry a promise of awakening and resurrection.

The first ten plates of *Milton* tell the story of division, a division far more subtle than that seen in *The Four Zoas* and therefore more insidious. It is a world of "Chains of the mind lock'd up" and "Druid rocks and Snows of doubt and reasoning" (11.6 & 9 K., 482).

Formlessness gives way to the Spectre as Los, terrified, watches the birth of Satan. This is no horror of hell-fire and brimstone but one whose "Work is Eternal Death"(1:17). Los's youngest born is:

Prince of the Starry Hosts

And of the Wheels of Heaven, to turn the Mills day & night?
Art thou not Newton's Pantocrator, weaving the Woof of Locke
To Mortals thy Mills seem every Thing; and the Harrow of Shaddai
A scheme of Human conduct invisible & incomprehensible.

(4:11.9-13 K., 483)

Palamabron and Rintrah, the other sons of Los are overshadowed for Satan the usurper has even forced Palamabron to toil in his mills. The personal element comes in here, for this was Blake's way of saying that under Hayley's patronage he was forced to perform unworthy tasks, but in the larger context Blake's point is that when tyranny is triumphant finer human energies are automatically debased. Even Los is taken in by Satan's wiles:

for he
With incomparable mildness
With most endearing love
He soft intreated Los to give to him Palamabron's station.

(7:11.6-8 K., 486)

Los assents to this dislocation of powers and Satan declaring himself God, spreads Sin with his laws. Only Rintrah at first tries to resist but when all Eden assembles in judgment Satan is triumphant. This triumph is the victory of a rigid code, the code that Milton had believed in.

let all obey my principles of moral individuality
Transgressors I will rend off for ever.

(9:1.26-27 K., 490)

Wrath and Pity, the two sons of Los who stood together are divided by Satan and with this terrible separation we come to Plate 10 (see plate 100).⁵⁰

Here three figures, resembling each other, stand together yet divided. Satan burns in hell fires which turn to solid blackness around him while Rintrah and Palamabron stand unsure and pitying. Once the brothers are divided Los and Enitharmon realise that Satan is Urizenic power, darkening the world and destroying all light but realisation comes too late, for Satan has succeeded in dividing the nations. The illustration to Plate 14[K] 15[E] shows us the ultimate consequence of the division for here brother Cain has slain brother Abel and it is this fratricide, symbolic of disastrous division, that compells Milton to descend. This murder has divided humanity into a collapsed body and a fleeing spectre; it will be Milton's task to heal this primal rift and thereby redeem the world and himself. In the performance of this task Blake calls upon the poet specifically to come to terms with his Spectre-Satan, the rational faculty which destroys by doubting all that cannot be scientifically proved:

I will go down to self annihilation and eternal death
Lest the Last Judgment come & find me unannihilated
And I be seiz'd & giv'n into the hands of my own selfhood.
... What do I here before the Judgment? without my Emanation?
With the daughters of memory & not the daughters of inspiration?
I in my Selfhood am that Satan: I am that Evil One
He is my Spectre.

(14:11.22-31 K., 495-96)



Pl. 100 *Milton.*



Pl. 101 *Milton.*

The passage that follows describes Milton leaving behind his "real & immortal Self"(1.11) in order to descend to earth and further the cause of righteousness. The concept behind the passage is very Zoroastrian, for just as Milton leaves behind his spiritual self for the sake of creating a better world, the Fravashis descend from the Menok (spiritual) to the Getik (material) state in order to help Ahura Mazda achieve the perfect kingdom. Unlike the ugliness and fear that accompanies the Platonic descent of the soul, the Fravashis, like Milton, view the task as a "wondrous journey on the earth"(1.26), the fulfilment of which will provide great satisfaction. On this earth the Zoroastrian is a soldier battling with evil and Plate 16 depicts Milton casting away all externals in order to enter fully into the spiritual battle. Rays of light from the halo around his head mingle with rays from the globe of a Sun behind him, this illumination standing out in an otherwise dark page (see plate 101).⁵¹

As Milton descends he sees one by one the truth of the realms beneath. There is man, who because of his imaginative failure, is sunk into a deadly sleep from which he will be aroused only on the Day of Judgment. There are the cruelties and divisions of the world of matter, for Milton is now in direct conflict with the spectres and those "female forms" whose task seems to be "dividing & uniting without end or number." The various Zoas, doubting the conclusion observe the descent. Orc realises Milton's revolutionary mission and struggles to free himself, while his bride, fallen nature, describes her garments as the errors that Milton must abolish: the "misery of unhappy Families," "poverty, pain & woe," "the sick Father," "The Prisoner in the Stone Dungeon & the slave at the Mill"(18: K., 499). Orc begs her to rend this garment of "Pity & Compassion," the true garment that is Jerusalem and as the other Zoas gear themselves up to oppose Milton's passage, darkness and division overtake the earth.

Milton, the creative artist had embodied in his life and in his work the sins of his own society and its laws. In now destroying this inner selfishness he has to destroy the society that had nurtured it and to annihilate the false beliefs that produced such a civilization. So Milton, youthful and muscular, strides forward to grapple with his selfhood in the form of a Urizenic figure clasping the stone tablets of the Law. We realise from the plates that follow, that the resolution will not be either simple or straightforward. Milton's three wives and three daughters turn away in Plate 19[E] 17[K], while the division between Los and Urizen is depicted by the head of Urizen, and the headless body of Los, symbolic of the separation of England's head and body, the tearing apart caused by the Civil War. Milton's task then is twofold and interconnected. He has to firstly overcome his selfhood, or in Zurvanite terms know himself as he really is and by performing his second task of resurrecting the Spiritual Body bring to perfection an earth that has been torn apart by doubts and divisions.

In the Iranian myth, the first creation is that of the sky. Conceived as an empty shell, round and made of ruby or crystal it encloses everything on earth. Traditionally seen as a celestial substance, metallic or crystalline, its characteristics are brightness and hardness for it forms a fortress that guards what lies within. Its protective nature is referred to by a simile in *Yt* 13.2 where it is described as "Upon and around this earth just like a bird [upon] an egg."⁵² The Mundane Egg of Plate 19[K] has a similar protective function. Just as in the *Bundahishn*, Ahriman's attack shatters the harmony of the physical world dividing it into seven zones or "keshvars," when all became "duality and persecution, contention, and mingling of high and low,"⁵³ similarly Milton's journey reveals a world torn apart. Interestingly in the *Bundahishn* Hell is in the middle of the earth, the spot where the Evil one pierced within, just as Blake's dissolving world "fell

towards the Centre in dire ruin sinking down"(19:1.21 K., 500) and the Four Zoas who stood around "The Throne Divine" divide and are flung into chaos.

Ohrmazd in the *Denkart* myth learnt to look within for salvation, just as Blake teaches us that because "each mortal brain is wall'd and moated round within"(20:11.36-37 K., 502), we should "Seek not thy heavenly father then beyond the skies," but correct inner divisions. This is the most difficult of all tasks and as Milton struggles with his Reason, Albion begins to stir. However Los, feeling that the task is impossible, remains in complete despair until he recalls an old Prophecy in Eden that Milton will reascend from the Vale of Felpham. Milton has at last fallen until he has entered the body of Blake through his "left foot." Milton stoops down binding the material world as a sandal onto that foot; Frye observes that this also unites him simultaneously with Los, the spiritual prototype of poetry.⁵⁴ In one powerful metaphor then Blake gives us a union that brings together the material and the spiritual to guide Milton on to true vision. Blake and Milton's physical merging is a method by which Blake not only acknowledges his debt to Milton, but also expresses Milton's debt to himself for now Blake has taken over the task of completing Milton's work. Along with Los entering Blake we also have Ololon, the eternal form of the six-fold emanation descending to aid Milton.

Ololon, the feminine creative principle had been banished as Eve, from Milton's Paradise, but Blake emphasizes that only when she descends from eternity and unites with Milton will true vision and spiritual illumination be achieved. Ololon's descent too reminds us of the choice of the winged Fravashis the eternal beings who chose to assume

a physical body and aid Ahura Mazda in the battle against Ahrimanic oppression. What stresses the connection is a tiny figure, wing-like arms outstretched, at the bottom of Plate [E] 23 [K] 21, commanded to:

Watch over this world, and with your brooding wings
Renew it to Eternal life.

(21.11.55-56 K., 504)

Another Zoroastrian link is the role of fire as representative of creativity, seen in the description of the entry of Los into Blake's being. This entry also symbolizes the Lambeth period of Blake's Inspiration. Los is described as "a terrible flaming Sun" "that fierce glowing fire" (22:11.5 & 7 K., 505) who "kissed me & wish'd me health." It is this flaming vision which enters Blake's soul and enables him to rise "in fury & strength."

From this entry to the end of Book I we see an emphasis on the "Six thousand years" which are now complete. These were six thousand years of "Time & Space," which even when they vanish will leave a permanent reminder behind. In the *Bundahishn* myth, Ahura Mazda "knew, through omniscience, that for three thousand years there is an intermingling of the wills of Auharmazd and Ahriman, and in the last three thousand years the evil spirit is disabled."⁵⁵ Here in Blake's text too the first two periods of six thousand years are over and the time has come for the removal of evil and the restoration of the earth to its pristine glory.

Los and Blake now move together towards the city of Art but at the gate Rintrah and Palamabron, Wrath and Pity, try to prevent entry. They have observed the misery on earth arising from Milton's religion and fear that no good can come of permitting Blake, who contains Milton's spirit, entrance into their world. A resume of materialism follows,

from Voltaire and Rousseau through Swedenborg even down to the Methodists Whitefield and Wesley. But Los's anger dissolves as he realises that the six thousand years allotted to creation are almost over and the justification of these errors will soon be revealed. Milton, once reunited with truth, will redeem himself and correct his doctrines;

O go not forth in Martyrdoms & Wars!

We were plac'd here by the Universal Brotherhood & Mercy

With powers fitted to circumscribe this dark Satanic death

But how this is as yet we know not, and we cannot know

Till Albion is arisen; then patient wait a little while

Six Thousand years are pass's away, the end approaches fast:

This mighty one is come from Eden, he is of the Elect

Who died from Earth & he is return'd before the Judgment,

This Thing.

Was never known, that one of the holy dead should willing return

Then patient wait a little while the Last Vintage is over.

(23:ll.49-58 K., 507-08)

Regeneration begins in Golgonooza, the City of Imagination for here Milton understands the truth of mystical vision. With this comes a perception of the value of all creation which continues till the end of the first book of *Milton*. Milton on returning to earth had seen civilization at the point of collapse, overtaken by materialism and imperialism. Golgonooza now promises the attainment of civilized liberty, a vision of the divinity and unity available to all mankind. In Golgonooza all men will speak the language of the imagination for all, having passed through the drama of human life--its creation, struggle and redemption--work towards the final restoration of that which is

good. Art here is holy and the end of the intellectual journey finds man in the land of the spirit. Here there are no divisions between mind and spirit, body and soul, for the antithesis will end in synthesis.

Milton's poetic perception had been dimmed by the emphasis on scientific and rational analysis but in Golgonooza all those errors are at an end. The descent of the soul has its positive features, for Blake like Zoroaster, preaches the value and mercy of material creation. In both systems Creation is a stage that aids in the final renewal of the earth and contains great beauty and compassion:

And every Generated Body in its inward Form
Is a garden of delight & a building of magnificence.

And in a line which condenses into itself the most fundamental concepts of Zoroastrian theology, Blake tells us that:

Every Natural Effect has a Spiritual Cause, and Not
A Natural, for a Natural Cause only seems.

(26:ll.31-32 & 44-45 K., 512,513)

It is this awareness of the spiritual foundation of all life that is the strength of the visionary and the basis of the poetic faculty. True poetry must preserve the inward vision, which is why Los struggles against Urizen, Satan and all those who deny the unity of life. When Milton erred, the integrity of life was lost in divisive battles and the well-being of the entire universe was threatened. In a world which recognizes the spiritual basis of all being a centipede, grasshopper, or tiny spider each have their role. With Milton's recognition of this truth an army of these little creatures marches across the centre of Plate 29A[E], [K]27, while in the next plate the excellence of all life is

emphasised on a page full of tiny bird and insect figures and by a Phoenix-like bird figure soaring upwards. It seems to illustrate the phoenix role of the imagination which "every Seven Ages is Incircled with a Flaming fire" (28:l.57 K., 516), for in a world of true value every thing has meaning:

Everytime less than a pulsation of the artery
Is equal in its period & value to Six thousand years.

(28: ll.62-63 K., 516)

The microscope and the telescope might reveal details unseen by the eye but they seek to reduce not teach values. It is the task of the Poet to conduct Spirits "to be vegetated into great Golgonooza" (29: ll.47-48 K., 517), free of the pillars of Satanic tyranny which wants to codify the great multitude of life within its pillars of "Temperance, Prudence, Justice and Fortitude."

Book I ends with four naked human dancers moving free of all restraint; but a black chasm still remains which has to be crossed before we can understand the true meaning of Golgonooza. If Blake's Jerusalem is the heavenly archetype of perfection, Golgonooza is the city of vision that Los strives to build on earth. It is a city of the imagination as opposed to Blake's Babylon, creation of disorder and strife. As Kathleen Raine says, the city of Golgonooza "exists in time" and it is towards this achievement that men and women must labour for the city of art and creation embodies true human values and realities.⁵⁶

I

Golgonooza is a place of love and forgiveness that leads us towards Beulah where Book II opens, the realm of joyous sexual love "where contrarities are equally True." The title page illustration emphasizes this point for tiny falling figures reverse to become those rising and while Book I ended with a dark chasm here there is light and life springing up again. Spirits ascend from both margins of the page while at the bottom three reclining figures begin to awaken. Beulah is a state where "no dispute can come" (l.3), a place as secure as a mother's loving arms, a pleasant land where there is unity not division and where even the body and soul have reconciled themselves and are at peace. From this vantage point the sons and daughters of Ololon can observe the progress of Milton in the strife below.

While Christianity and most Eastern philosophies stress the polarity between the body and the soul, Zoroastrianism stresses the integration of body, mind and spirit. Matter is seen as an emanation of spirit for within the mortal, corporeal body exists invisible spiritual principles, both being aspects of one reality. Blake in the concept of Beulah celebrates that physical love which leads to spiritual wholeness and loss of self-absorption or selfhood in union with another. Beulah is presented as an ideal, like Golgonooza and opposed to its unity and wholeness is the struggle Milton is engaged in, a world "where they know not of Regeneration, but only of Generation" (31: l.19 K., 520), where all is:

in contrarious

And cruel opposition, Element against Element opposed in War

Not Mental, as the wars of Eternity, but a Corporeal strife.

(31: ll.23-25 K., 520)

Hope is however apparent in the vines and tendrils of the illuminated text in Plate 35D[E], [K]32, as in the ecstatic song of the lark which begins "the Choir of Day." The birdsong is symbolic of the harmony possible in a correctly ordered world where every flower and herb and tree exists within an ordered plan.

Milton is now instructed by "The Seven Angels of the Presence" in the doctrine of "States." He learns the difference between the permanent individuality or essence and the exterior being. It is also important to see the change and development in Blake's use of the term Satan. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Satan had stood for positive rebellion against rigid order, here Satan has become the polar opposite of the Lamb of God, two extremes between which the soul chooses. The first is selfhood, petty and cruel wrath, as opposed to self-annihilation, love and the Divine Body. Blake's message is now very clear even didactic:

Satan and Adam are States Created into Twenty-Seven Churches
 Judge then of thy own Self: Thy Eternal Lineaments explore
 What is Eternal & What Changeable & what Annihilable.
 The Imagination is not a state: it is the Human Existence itself
 Affection or love becomes a state when divided from Imagination
 Whatever can be created can be Annihilated Forms cannot
 The Oak is cut down by the Ax, the Lamb falls by the knife
 But their Forms Exist For-ever.

(32: ll.25-38 K., 521-22)

Blake's use of the "Forms," can here be linked with the idea of the Universal spiritual essence, the Fravashis who pre-existed in the spiritual world before entering a material body. This inter-penetration of the spiritual with the physical is akin to Blake's concept, and it is this deep-rooted belief in eternity and infinity available to all creation, not only mankind, that is emphasised greatly in Zoroastrianism. Orthodox Christianity stresses a value-based judgment dividing men into pure souls and sinners, while the Greek idea of Forms is more an intellectualised concept. In Blake, as in Zoroastrianism, the passage of the Oak and the Lamb, from one state of sensitivity and awareness to another state of higher awareness is accepted as an a-priori fact, neither state negating or denying the other and all part of a universal plan. In *Milton* as in all the Prophetic Books, the main stress is on the reunification of the physical, mental, moral and spiritual aspects of life after the false divisions they have been made to suffer. Milton has come to remove such false divisions, by his poetic intuition which transcends them and now he announces his task of freeing Jerusalem, and his own true self, from the divisive spectre of Satan.

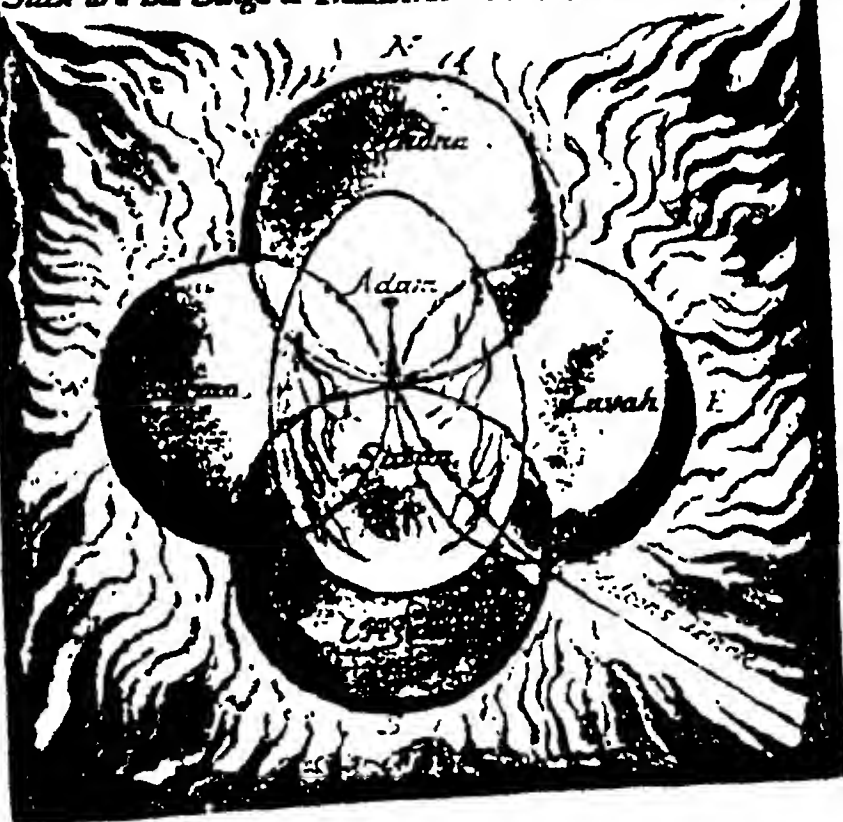
Seen from this angle the famous plate (see Plate 102)⁵⁷ showing Milton's journey into the centre of the Mundane Egg can be seen as a bringing together of the four divided Zoas, which had fallen into division through doubts and disunity; a reaching beyond externals to the final conflict at the centre--the conflict between Adam and Satan. Fires surround the whole scene but rather than suggesting hellish Satanic fires the flames inside the Mundane Egg are rosy, with a blue sky forming the background. These rosy flames are far more suggestive of the cleansing Zoroastrian fires, that, destroying Ahrimanic evil and the false divisions of the Zoas, will bring unity and perfection again on earth.

Fitting in with the theme of the coming Regeneration are two plates [E]32 and 37,

And the Divine Voice was heard in the Songs of Beulah Say:

When I first Married you I gave you all my whole Soul
I thought that you would love me as I love you in my delights
Speaking for pleasures in my pleasures O Daughter of Babylon
Thou wast most lovely, mild & gentle now thou art terrible
In jealousy & unlovely in my sight. because thou hast cruelly
Cut off my loves in fury all I have no love left for thee
My love depends on him thou lovest & on his dear loves
Depend thy pleasures which thou hast cut off by jealousy
Therefore I show my jealousy & set before you Death
Behold Milton descended to redeem the Female Shade
From Death Eternal: seek your rest in he continually Redeemed
By death & misery of chase your love & by Annihilation
When the Secret Female perceives that Milton annihilates
Himself: that would all his loves by her cut off: he leaves
Her alone: inwardly destroying himself from Female loves
She shall relent in fear of death; She shall begin to give
Her maidens to her husband: delighting in his delight
And then & then alone begins the happy period of joy
As it is done in Beulah & thou O Virgin Babylon Mother of Woe
Shalt bring Jerusalem in thine arms in the night watches: and
No longer turn thy back a minning Harlot in the streets
Shalt give her also the arms of God your Lord & Husband

Such are the Songs of Beulah in the Lamentations of Ololon





Pl. 103 *Milton.*



Pl. 104 *Milton.*

inscribed "William" and "Robert," both mirror-identical images (see Plates 103-104).⁵⁸ These two brothers are to be seen in contrast to the murdering brothers Cain and Abel who began the divisions at the start of this Prophetic Book. If the Fravashi is the "spiritual prototype" of the earthly being, then here we can see Robert as the spiritual or eternal form and William, on earth, as the generative form, within whom the spirit appears. The pictures present a scene of descent and ascent, steps downwards behind William, steps upwards behind Robert, forming a symbolic ladder of life.

The point of view in the text moves again after this to Beulah then to Ololon's descent and her appearance before Blake in his garden. Ololon is met in her descent by the lark, "Los's Messenger." The Song of the Lark and the smell of wild thyme are both connected with moments of supreme vision. There is an intense responsiveness to the beauty and inspiration available in the natural world as poetic inspiration and true spirit, the Eternal Form of Milton, come together in the domestic simplicity of Blake's cottage garden. As Milton finally perceives the eternal truth he knows that to free himself from Satan's bondage he has to go beyond the limited selfhood of the fearful "I" :

Know Thou I come to Self Annihilation
 Such are the Laws of Eternity, that each shall mutually
 Annihilate himself for others good, as I for thee
 Thy purpose & the purpose of Thy Priests & Thy Churches
 Is to impress on men the fear of death, to teach
 Trembling & fear, terror, constriction, abject selfishness

Mine is to teach Men to despise death & to go on in fearless Majesty.

(38: 11.34-41 K., 530)

For the Zoroastrian there is no hell-fire to fear, no abject submission to an inscrutable destiny. The religion of the good life has faith in an even better future. When Ohrmazd in the Zurvan myth came to self awareness, he realised that he was not only possessed of light and wisdom but also power, goodness and mercy. Though Ohrmazd knows that finally there can be no compromise he offers peace to his enemy, so that Ahriman too may share in eternal life becoming "deathless and unageing." Ahriman cannot be cajoled out of his wickedness, for he will not believe Ohrmazd, "I will not bring aid to thy creation nor will I give it praise. I will destroy thee and thy creation for Ever."⁵⁹ At the end of *Milton* we find a similar moment of compassion for Satan:

I also stood in Satan's bosom & beheld its desolation:

A ruin'd Man, a ruin'd building of God.

(38: 11.15-16 K., 530)

but like Ahriman, Satan rejects the poet's compassion declaring arrogantly:

I am God of all, the living and the dead

Fall therefore down & worship me.

(38: 11.52-53 K., 530)

and now Milton surrounded by "a mighty column of fire," calls on Albion to awake and cast Satan out into the Lake of Los. The Four Zoas awaken from their slumber and Ololon his spiritual counterpart prepares Milton for the final purging and sacrifice, when error will be destroyed, and Milton, cleansed and whole again, is transformed into Jesus. The idea used here is almost identical with that describing the final renewal by which the



Pl. 105 *Michel.*



Pl. 106 *Milton.*

Zoroastrian world will be cleansed and redeemed:

To bathe in the waters of life, to wash off the Not Human
 I come in Self-annihilation & the grandeur of Inspiration
 To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the Saviour.

It is Milton's final task to cast away:

The Abomination of Desolation
 Which Jesus rent & now shall wholly purge away with Fire
 Till generation is swallow'd up in Regeneration

(41: II.1-28 K., 533)

Errors and falsehood cannot bear the purging fire neither can Satan; both are consumed and the soul, prepared, awaits the harvest of nations. The creative role of fire, emphasized throughout Blake's works reaches a climax in the plate in which Los speaks to the poet (see Plate 105),⁶⁰ from within a sun of flames. Burning flames of inspiration reach around the globe as spiritual illumination comes with fire, for Los descends outside his sun and steps out to reach the poet.

Two important Zoroastrian links are to be observed towards the end of *Milton*. In Plate 42A[E] a screaming eagle awakens Albion, who lies limply with a female figure whom Erdman takes to represent England (see Plate 106).⁶¹ Both figures have to be almost forced awake by the call of the eagle, and it is significant that this eagle resembles the Fravashi symbol, and will be repeated in Plate 33 of *Jerusalem*. There, as here, in keeping with the nature of the guardian-Fravashi, the eagle calls mankind to awaken from

earthly stupor and aspire to divinity beyond. The entire conclusion of *Milton*, the casting away of error into the Lake of Fire, the purging of falsehood, the bathing in "The waters of life" and the return from flames, tested and whole is closely linked with the Zoroastrian apocalypse. Zoroastrianism tells us that all souls will have to go through the great ordeal of molten metal, this fiery test being necessary for the purification of the inner spiritual self. The untruthful shall be frustrated, the truthful blessed. The righteous person does not live for himself alone, but strives for the salvation of the souls of all humanity. Man, the "hamkar" or fellow-worker of Ahura Mazda participates as assistant in the task at the end:

Afterwards the fire melt[s] the metal in the hills and mountains,
and it remains on this earth like a river. Then all men will pass into that
melted metal and will become pure; when one is righteous then it seems
to him just as though he walks continually in warm milk, but when
wicked he walks continually in melted metal.⁶²

The "warm milk" of the Zoroastrian creation myth is echoed by Blake's "sweet River of milk" (I: 21.1.15 K., 503) to be found in Eden, and this brings us to the second Zoroastrian link at the end of *Milton*. A line written behind a sketch for design [K]43 says:

Father & Mother, I return from flames of fire, tried & pure & white.

(K., 535)

This design (See Plate 107)⁶³ represents a male and a female human form standing on either side of a central female figure, who is casting off her earthly garments, as her arms soar upwards. She appears a "human form divine," watching over the "great Harvest and Vintage" that is about to begin. Kathleen Raine sees the central figure as Ahania-emerging as Ceres, the Earth-Mother.⁶⁴ The end of *Milton* seems at first a strange place



Pl. 107 *Milton.*

to introduce the Iranian legend of the first man and woman, Mashya and Mashyoi, the pair who came into the world from a plant, a rhubarb (*rivas*) stalk that grew and divided into separate human beings. The legend tells us that they, first reverencing Ahura Mazda, were seduced to evil ways. The story of how this first couple populated the earth occupies much of Ch.XV of the *Bundahisn* but significantly in Ch.XXX just before the Zoroastrian creation myth concludes, Mashya and Mashyoi are re-introduced. When the end of material creation begins, the bones of Gayomard, the first man are roused up, then those of Mashya and Mashyoi, then those of the rest of mankind. All material beings assume their bodies and their forms and in a great assembly all will stand together when "a wicked man becomes as conspicuous as a white sheep among those which are black." Then follows, "The punishment of the three nights" for those who have sinned, before all Creation faces the Renewal after the purging of molten metal.⁶⁵ The earth becomes perfected "iceless," "slopeless" all evil has been destroyed forever and the future will be one of unalloyed bliss.

In the light of this legend, Blake's line, written behind sketch [K]43, reveals a great deal. The two plant figures--in the legend it is a "rivas" plant, the *Rheum vibes*, with one stem and fifteen leaves--"Father" and "Mother" of mankind stand watching their daughter, a female figure, embodiment of fecundity, generation and creative life, a function similar to that of Ahania as she lifts her arms joyously. As representative of humanity, she has been through the river of fire, where having been tried she has passed the test and is forever "white," "pure" and perfected.

Milton has completed the search within; working his way through the false divisions and restraints of intellect, feeling and desire, he has finally taught all humanity that only by casting off the garments of self can truth and beauty be found beneath.

Milton's journey on earth has been a success. Like Christ he has removed those sins present even at the beginning of Creation, and a new united world of regenerated spirits celebrates his triumph. The imagination of Milton, Blake and all humanity has been awakened and the errors of the intellect cast out. Ohrmazd at the end of the myth rose to full divinity once he awakened to true awareness, similarly all humanity recognizes its infinite potential. Blake's final concern in *Milton* is with the divine potential of the Imagination, once freed from falsehood and restraint. The imagination is at the centre of all art and creativity and therefore it is an essential of Blake's religion, which develops not only the creative but the spiritual potential. Milton's re-education is important because with the realisation of the creative potential comes visionary perception; a prelude to the perfection that will come in *Jerusalem* when a spiritual, intellectual and creative transformation of all beings will bring mankind to the Zoroastrian ideal of the perfected body uniting with a higher consciousness and becoming one with the spirit that is everywhere

Notes

¹ Blake to Thomas Butts, 16 August 1803, and Blake to William Hayley 23 October 1804. From Geoffrey Keynes, ed., *The Letters of William Blake: With Related Documents*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 65 & 101.

² Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (1963; rpt. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964), World Perspective Series, p. 139.

³ Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religion Beliefs and Practices*, p. 112.

⁴ Mary Boyce, "Some Reflections on Zurvanism" rpt. from Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, 1957, pp. 308-09. •

While analysing R.C. Zaehner's *Zurvan: A Zoroastrian Dilemma*, Boyce also discusses other theories regarding Zurvanism and points out different aspects of the Zurvan heresy.

⁵ R.C. Zaehner, *Zurvan: A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955).

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60. This is a quotation from Eznik of Kolb. Theodore Abu Qurra gives more details of Zurvan's sacrifice.

After his wife had been pregnant with Ohrmazd for seven hundred years, Zurvan doubted whether a child had been conceived. From this doubt came the conception of

Ahriman. See Zaehner, p. 63.

⁹ Zaehner, *Teachings of the Magi*, p. 22. He is quoting from the "Select Counsels of the Ancient Sages," in the *Pahlavi Texts*.

¹⁰ Plate 86 Ruthven Todd, *Tracks in the Snow* p. 57, "Jehovah and his two sons Satan and Adam."

Plate 87 From Bindman, p. 623. "The Laocoon."

¹¹ R.C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, pp. 220-22. The myth is quoted by Zaehner from Madan, ed., *The Denkart*, 282.21 - 283-17.

¹² Bryant, Vol. III, pp. 588-595.

¹³ Désirée Hirst, *Hidden Riches*, p. 317.

¹⁴ Mellor, *Blake's Human Form Divine*, p. 178. See Mellor's discussion of Morton Paley "Blake's *Night Thoughts*: An Exploration of the Fallen World," in A. Rosenfeld ed., *Blake's Essays for Damon* (Providence, R.I. 1969). Paley argues that Blake had fully developed his myth for the *Four Zoas* before he began illustrating *The Night Thoughts*.

¹⁵ Keynes, *Blake Studies*, p. 44. for Plate 88 see Keynes, Plate 18.

¹⁶ Plate 89-90 Bindman, *Night Thoughts* 363 and Keynes, *Blake Studies*, plate 17.

¹⁷ G.E. Bentley Jr., ed., *William Blake's Vala or The Four Zoas: A Facsimile of the Manuscript, A Transcript of the Poem and a Study of Its Growth and Significance*

(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

¹⁸ *Plate 91* Paley and Phillips, ed., *William Blake: Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes*, p. 149.

¹⁹ Despite all attempts the illustrations of the Bentley Facsimile were not available for copy. Some illustrations are therefore taken from other sources, others are described.

²⁰ David Fuller, *Blake's Heroic Argument*, p. 89. For *Plate 92* see Fuller plate 3. "The Whirlwind Ezekiel's Vision of the Cherubim and the Eyed wheels." In Ezekiel God is visualized in a chariot surrounded by four "living creatures" full of eyes resembling an eagle, an ox, a lion and a man. In *Revelations* Ezekiel's chariot has become a throne and the same expression "living creatures" or "Zoa" is used, though the 1611 version translates it as "beasts."

²¹ Dastur Framroze A. Bode, *Man Soul Immortality in Zoroastrianism*, p. 34.

As seen in Ch. III Bode's divisions are, The vital or Astral Man composed of Ustana, Kehr and Tevesi; the psychological man made up of Manah, Sraos; the ethical man endowed with Ahu, Daena, Chisti, and the Spiritual man endowed with Urvan, Fravasi, Haurvatat and Ameretat.

The symbolism of four-foldness is greatly stressed in Hinduism, in the *Rig-Veda* the four-fold division is made by the Lord of the seasons who gives four quarters to the Moon. It has been developed into a system which interlinks myth and mathematics with cosmic rhythms. Blavatsky studies the lunar cycle as "the four sevens," calling them the "Four Maharajahs" who also become the four cardinal points that maintain the balance of

⁴⁷ In conversation with H. Crabb Robinson Jan. 6, 1826 quoted by S. Foster Damon, *William Blake: Philosophy and Symbols*, p. 174.

⁴⁸ In conversation with M. Crabb Robinson Dec. 17, 1825, quoted S. Foster Damon, p. 175

⁴⁹ Hagstrum, pp. 109-10.

⁵⁰ Plate 100 Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 226. Milton 10A. The Keynes text differs in the numbering of the Plates as is indicated with references in the text.

⁵¹ Plate 101 Erdman, p. 16A, p. 232.

⁵² Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism* I, pp. 132-33.

⁵³ E.W. West trans., *Pahlavi Texts*, SBE V, p. 19

⁵⁴ Frye, p. 338.

⁵⁵ E.W. West, trans., *Pahlavi Texts* SBE V, p. 7.

⁵⁶ Kathleen Raine, "The City in Blake's Prophetic Poetry," from *Golgonooza: City of Imagination: Last Studies in William Blake* (Ipswich: Golgonooza Press, 1991), pp. 110-15.

⁵⁷ Plate 102 Erdman, Plate 36A [K 33], p. 252.

⁵⁸ Plates 103 and 104 Erdman, Plate 32 & 37, pp. 248 & 253.

⁵⁹ Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, p. 256.

⁶⁰ Plate 105 Erdman, Plate 47A, p. 263. Erdman has changed the location of his plate from Plate 43 to Plate 47A.

⁶¹ Plate 106 Erdman, Plate 42A, p. 258.

⁶² E.W. West, trans., *Pahlavi Texts*, pp. 125-26.

⁶³ Plate 107 Erdman, Plate 50A, p. 266 [K]43.

⁶⁴ Raine, *Blake and Tradition* II, p. 162.

⁶⁵ E.W. West, trans., *Pahlavi Texts*, pp. 123-30.

Chapter - VI

At Heaven's Gate : Ultimate Perfection

For Lo! The Night of Death is past and the Eternal Day
Appears upon our Hills.

(*Jerusalem IV: 97:3-4*)

In *Milton* Blake had fashioned Golgonooza, City of Imagination, because for him only the creative power of the imagination could lead man to the innermost depths of the soul, the place where man sees God. All his life Blake sought the Divinity not to gain theological knowledge but to discover the divine essence, that spark which forms the basis of every human life. Blake's search ends in his final epic which is about the quest for that divine spark, the Jerusalem within each individual, where Reality is finally discerned as man reaches true communion with God. *Jerusalem* changes neither the theme nor the central narrative of *The Four Zoas* and *Milton*, but is a poem where all his earlier symbols stand revealed and which brings to a culmination many of Blake's themes. Written at the end of his life by a poet rejected by the public, dogged by poverty, hidden in obscurity, *Jerusalem* is also a powerful statement of Blake's own personal triumph over the demons of doubt and despair. It is here that he makes his final attempt to fulfil his "great task" :

To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes
Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought, into Eternity
Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination.

(*J. 5:11.18-20 K., 623*)

In the process of this "opening" he will resolve those dualities which had pursued him all his life, the issues of Doubt versus Faith, the Spectre versus the Emanation, Time versus Eternity.

I

Jerusalem the summation of Blake's work in the form of the Illuminated Book reveals the final spiritual liberty reached when divisions have been resolved and unity achieved. The stress throughout the poem is on the awakening of the Imagination through the power vested in the Emanation. *Jerusalem* describes the final clash between the Satanic selfhood or the critical faculty of the spectre and the generous life-giving part of the spiritual man. Jerusalem is identical to the Zoroastrian Daena, the feminine inner spirit, that portion of Being which can never wholly forget God. She mourns while Albion denies the Divinity, but as the link between God and man her task is to remind man continually of spiritual reality. At the end of Blake's three long Prophecies it is this emanation, Jerusalem, the soul's means of perception, that finally occupies centre-stage. While *Milton*, the psychological account of a man who actually lived, involves historical considerations *Jerusalem* is without these explicit connections. Rather it is the drama of the inner conflict in all mankind. The emanation, besides its spiritual aspect, is also for Blake the sensuous and instinctive part of man, the feminine part of Albion. Therefore spiritual and sensuous being unite in the concept of Jerusalem. As long as the emanation remains divided from Albion, the struggle and clash continue. It is only when Jerusalem comes to occupy her rightful place that Blake's myth of mankind is over for all divisions end and reunions conclude in perfection.

In Zoroastrian terms, Albion by casting away Jerusalem, mutilates himself for he

has become a man without a Daena. The Daena, or Inner Self, is the sense of spiritual perception. Whatever is revealed to the Daena becomes in Zoroastrian terminology, Revelation or "Din," Religion. She remains perpetually perfect in the celestial world. But the man who cuts himself off from his spiritual counterpart sees only his Shadow or Ahrimanic darkness--in Blakean terms, the spectre. Without his "celestial mirror of light,"¹ man's world becomes one of negations, and darkness and gloom abound in the plates of *Jerusalem* until Los begins his task at the furnaces. Light finally glows across the pages when Jerusalem enters and is reunited with mankind.

The structure of *Jerusalem* is superficially extremely simple. There are a hundred plates divided into four chapters, each with its own Preface in prose as well as an introductory lyric. Blake himself said that this epic was "a more consolidated and extended work" (*J:3 K.*, 620) than any he had earlier attempted. Blake wrote:

I give you the end of a golden string,
Only wind it into a ball
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate
Built in Jerusalem's wall.

(*J:77: ll.1-4, K.*, 716)

However the structure does not lend itself to such a simple unwinding. Earlier critics were confused at the repetitions and convolutions in the poem and when on 14 July 1811 Blake showed it to Southey, the reaction was typical, for Southey wrote that he had seen "a perfectly mad poem called *Jerusalem*."² *Jerusalem*, however, does have a planned

structure and as its title indicates is the most religious of all Blake's works, being markedly Biblical in allusion and tone. Harold Bloom finds that it resembles the pattern of the major Prophetic books of the Bible in that it works out a gradually sharpening antithesis between two contrary forces leading to a necessity for moral choice.³ Frye on the other hand, speaks of it as a drama in four Acts, portraying the Fall, the struggle in the fallen world, the world's redemption by a divine man in which eternal life and death achieve a simultaneous triumph and an apocalypse. But Frye's dramatic structure seems too externalised a pattern for a poem whose action is so internal. There is no working up to a climax in *Jerusalem* and the end according to Frye himself is almost an anticlimax.⁴

If we view the structure of *Jerusalem* as a pattern leading to the emergence of true consciousness in Albion, who represents not only "Alba," the ancient Celtic name for England, but also All Man, we can divide the movement of the poem into four parts, each reflecting Albion's internal struggle. This four-fold pattern of Doubt, Division, Illumination and Unity seems more applicable to an internal conflict and it is the clear-cut division of *Jerusalem* along this pattern which makes it the closest of all the Prophetic works structurally to the four-fold pattern of the *Denkari* the Zoroastrian myth of the Emergence of Consciousness. In this myth, as we have seen in Chapter V, Ohrmazd's doubt gives rise to division resulting in the birth of Ahriman or Satan whom Ohrmazd must subdue. He can only do this by total introspection which will lead to self-knowledge. Ohrmazd realises that only by emanating his own universe of Truth and Light can the lie and darkness be defeated. Once Ohrmazd casts away doubt he unites the warring elements within himself and is thus able to return creation to its proper sphere of action in the rule of perfect joy and all that is good.⁵

Blake's *Jerusalem* seems to follow this ancient pattern. In the frontispiece Los, in his human form as William Blake, is entering a dark place, the "void outside of Existence" (1: 1 K., 620). He is leading us towards the scene of action in "the interiors of Albion's Bosom" (31: ll.3-4 K., 656). Blake began *Jerusalem* in 1804. In 1809 he gives an account of his poem in the *Descriptive Catalogue*:

The strong Man represents the human sublime. The beautiful Man represents the human pathetic which was in the wars of Eden divided into male and female. The Ugly Man represents the human reason. They were originally one man, who was four-fold; he was self-divided, and his real humanity slain on the stems of generation, and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God. How he became divided is a subject of great sublimity and pathos. The Artist has written it under inspiration and will, if God please, publish it; it is voluminous, and contains the ancient history of Britain, and the world of Satan and of Adam.

(*Desc. Cat. V, The Ancient Britons K., 578*)

Albion, primal man, the protagonist of the epic plot bears in his role a marked similarity to the figure of Gayomard, Avestan Gaya-Maretan (Life-Death), the Persian mythical first man whose name unites in itself the dualistic aspects of life and death, symbolising the mortal body.⁶ Just as Gayomard symbolises the burden of life and death that each individual bears within himself at all times so Albion comes to represent all mortal men. He becomes England, as well as the tribes of Israel, he becomes the centre of all religions and even the cosmos itself, for the whole of nature and all mankind unite in this one figure.

Albion's story then is the story of the human race as well as that of the Universe.

His doubts represent the problems each individual faces and like Albion, the human race must work out its own salvation. The first two lines of the epic condense the whole movement:

Of the Sleep of Ulro! and of the passage through
Eternal Death! and of the awaking to Eternal life.

(J.4: 11.1-2 K., 622)

His is the story of the inward journey every man undertakes, travelling towards truth and right Consciousness in the depths of the soul, which ends only when Albion as Everyman travels away from false perceptions to emerge into the light of truth. As in Blake's other epics the characters are the innermost parts of Albion's being but the external voice in this poem is that of the Divine Vision who now calls directly to Albion:

Awake! awake O Sleeper of the land of Shadows Wake, expand!
I am in you and you in me. Mutual in love divine:
... Thy brethren call thee, and thy fathers and thy sons
Thy nurses and thy mothers, thy sisters and thy daughters
Weep at thy soul's disease, and the Divine Vision is darken'd
... Where hast thou hidden thy Emanation, lovely Jerusalem
From the Vision and fruition of the Holy-one?
I am not a God far off, I am a brother and friend.
Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me.

(J.4: 11.6-21 K., 622)

Albion, however, already fallen in the dark void of doubt, doubts the Creator's words, doubts Creation and above all doubts himself. By turning away from his Emanation Jerusalem he has left all light and hope of illumination. Jerusalem once rejected, divides,

His Spirit driven by the Stormy Whirls of Albion's sons, black and
 Opium, isolated from his back, he labours and he mourns.

For as this Emancipation divided, his Spectre also divided
 In terror of those stormy wheels; and the Spectre stood over Los
 howling in pain, a blinding Shadow blinding stark & opaque
 'neath the terrible Los: bloody cursing him for his friendship
 To Milton, suffraging murderous shafts against Albion.

Los roared and stamp'd the earth in his mighty & terrible wrath
 He spread and stamp'd the earth; then he threw down his hammer in rage &
 In fury: then he sat down and wept, tormented: Then arose
 And chanted his song, labouring with the clogs and hammer;
 But still the Spectre divided, and still his pain increased:

In pain the Spectre divided: in pain of hunger and thirst:
 To devour Los's Human Perfection, not when he saw that Los



and while her central identity remains shut within Albion's bosom she takes refuge with the Daughters of Beulah. Outwardly she has been scattered, reduced to unimportance--almost non-entity. Albion too suffers from this fragmentation of life:

But the perturbed Man away turns down the valleys dark;
Saying "We are not one: we are Many, thou most simulative
Phantom of the over-heated brain.

(J.4: 11.22-24 K., 622)

Albion denies God's goodness and mercy and the unity of life itself because he has denied faith:

By demonstration man alone can live, and not by faith.

(J.4: 1.28 K., 622)

The scene on Plate 4, where the text of Chapter I begins emphasizes the divisions that will overtake the protagonist for a cowed sibyl divides two images of the naked Albion. This division is continued in the next plate where the text and the illustrations depict separation: "Jerusalem is scatter'd abroad like a cloud of smoke" (5: 1.13 K., 623) and Albion is "Divided into Male and Female forms time after time" (5: 1.32 K., 623). In his search for true consciousness man has refused to accept the unity of the Divine Vision and has become the victim of his selfhood. His despair and doubts have given birth to the spectre, Satan or Reason, cut off from the rest of the human identity; while Albion's sons and Daughters, fragmented and despairing, come to represent the cruelty of man to man and woman to man. The divisions affect Los himself, for instead of working at forging a new world, his tongs and hammer lie idle as he is led astray by the arguments of despair. Here the floating figure above Los is no guardian angel but a tormentor trying to convince him that all hope has fled (See Plate 108).⁷ Blake's emphasis on these

divisions is important because these are the problems that beset all men for Albion's story follows the archetypal pattern of myth:

All things acted on Earth are seen in the bright sculptures of
 Los's Halls, and every Age renews its powers from these Works
 With every pathetic story possible to happen from Hate or
 Wayward love; & every sorrow and distress is carved here
 Every Affinity of Parents, Marriages & Friendships are here
 In all their various combinations wrought with wonderful Art,
 All that can happen to Man in his pilgrimage of seventy years.

(J.16: ll.61-67 K., 638)⁸

When Albion denied unity and faith he was denying the reality of vision and thus was already imprisoned by his despairing choice of the worst.⁹ This is the fate of man who on turning inwards, selfishly turns away from reality instead of seeking the truth within. Such a movement limits Albion to his own selfhood for by refusing to look beyond he is constricted and bound down into inevitable self-destruction. Plate 9 displays this for:

He who will not defend Truth may be compell'd to defend
 A lie: that he may be snared and caught and snared and taken

(J.9: ll.29-30 K., 628)

The illustration at the bottom of the Plate shows a naked Albion lying fallen, staring with open eyes at an upside down universe. From this position truth appears falsehood and grieving women around him mourn his loss of true vision. Only after liberating himself from the lies of selfhood can the search for illumination begin for, like Ohmazd in the *Denkari* myth, Albion must break off the self-made fetters before moving

forward in his discovery of true perception. At this stage Albion's unseeing stare indicates he is blind to all knowledge. He casts off the Holy Spirit, or Jerusalem, which was within him, turning rather to the false generative world of Vala-Rahab, the Harlot, who is representative of self-deluded Mystery. Albion has thus initiated a process of disintegration which leads to almost complete annihilation.

Blake's source for the figure of Jerusalem is Biblical, the visionary close of Isaiah and the apocalyptic climax of Revelation. The prophecy of Jerusalem was regarded in various ways, as a symbol of social as well as spiritual change. For Blake Jerusalem is not only a spiritual symbol but also has psychological and political aspects. She is the inner freedom promised by a regeneration of the spirit and the personality, which along with political liberty, are all interdependent.¹⁰ However, it is Jerusalem as a religious symbol which will be emphasized in this reading of the myth. Jerusalem was the Bride of the Lamb and therefore the means of Albion's communion with the Divinity. By casting her away Albion breaks the main link of man with his creator and must suffer terrible repercussions. In the Persian myth Ahriman arose out of Ohrmazd's divided self, here in an exact parallel Satan, or Albion's Spectre, arises as soon as his emanation is cast out:

Albion's Spectre from his Loins
 Tore forth in all the pomp of War:
 Satan his name: in flames of fire
 He stretch's his Druid Pillars far.

(J.27: ll.37-40 K., 650)

The process of disintegration continues as the Zoas divide and subdivide; at the culmination of the separations of Chapter I is heard Albion's despairing cry:

• If God was merciful. This could not be

(J.24: 1.53 K., 648)

Albion refuses to admit that his guilt, his own lack of faith has led to suffering and evil. He has initiated a reaction of multiplying divisions which lead to the negation of all good, the state of Ulro.

• Albion does not know how he is to overcome despair:

Doubt first assail'd me, then Shame took possession of me.

(J.21: 1.5 K., 643)

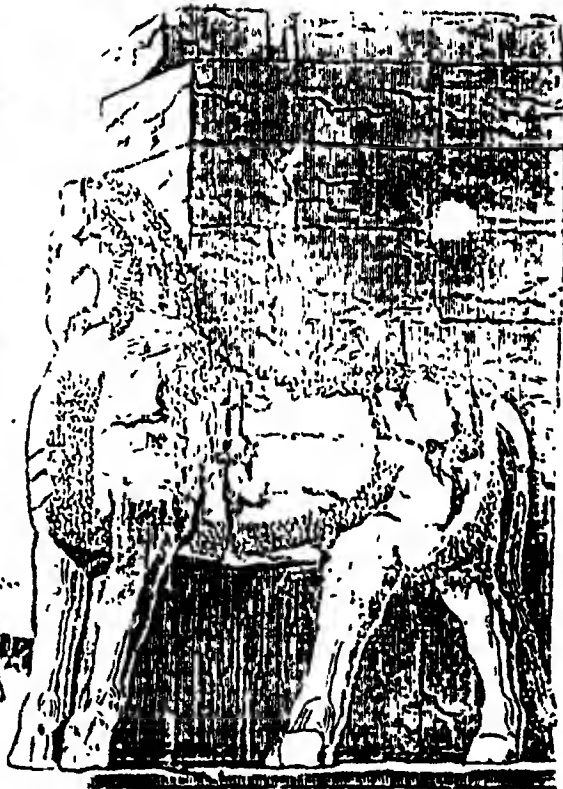
Now as the Zoas separate they become the four elements drawn out of Albion's limbs. The most important separation is that of Los, for the Poet-Creator stands for divine creative energy on earth. Only Los struggling to create Golgonooza will prevent Albion from falling into total non-entity or annihilation.

Throughout *Jerusalem* the activity of Los is especially stressed. He is constantly depicted in the text and in the illustrations as working with his imaginative tools, hammers and anvil, striving in the Furnaces to break down the false systems into which men have been entrapped. His task is to forge unity out of division and build the City of Imagination. Only by following Los, his imaginative power, can Albion escape the void he is facing. Mellor, in her discussion on *Jerusalem* feels that Los fulfils a threefold role.



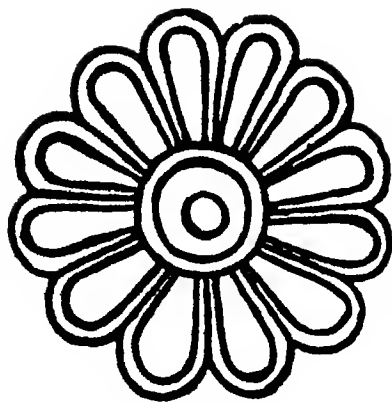
PL 109

Sculptures on the Gates of Persepolis





Pl. 110 Persian motifs



He has to awaken Albion to the divine vision and thereby force him to recognize the true relationship between man and God, man and woman, and man and his environment. Thus the waking of Albion will be a process of expansion and liberation from Albion's sleep which stands for the constriction of thought and action.¹¹

Los struggles in his Furnaces, "terrible eternal labour," even though all seems lost for Jerusalem has wandered "far away." The four-fold city of Golgonooza rises before our eyes out of this striving and it is interesting to note that this "great city" has four gates decorated with figures that recall immediately those sculptures guarding the gates of the ancient city of Persepolis. It also calls to mind the "var" or enclosure of the Zoroastrian mythical first King, Yima, which too was four-fold, shaped like a square. Blake had seen in the illustrations of travellers and antiquarians those "four sculptur'd Bulls" "Clay bak'd and enamel'd" (12: ll.62-64 K., 632) which he puts at the North gate of Golgonooza, the "four Lions terrible" of the Southern golden gate, the Western gates "four Cherubim . . . each winged with eight wings" (13: ll.6-8 K., 633) and the "wheels" of the Eastern gate (See Plates 109-110).¹² Los's "great city" is that of permanent realities where:

every thing exists and not one sigh nor smile nor tear

One hair, nor particle of dust, not one can pass away.

(J.13 & 14: ll.66-67 K., 634)

Yet, even while Los labours to deliver Albion and reunite him with his emanation, the process of disintegration and division continues to create chaos all over the earth. Blake knew the psychological devastation caused by doubt and division within the human soul¹³:

He who Doubts from what he sees
 Will ne'er Believe, do what you Please
 If the Sun and Moon should doubt
 They'd immediately go out

(Auguries of Innocence, ll.107-10, K., 433)

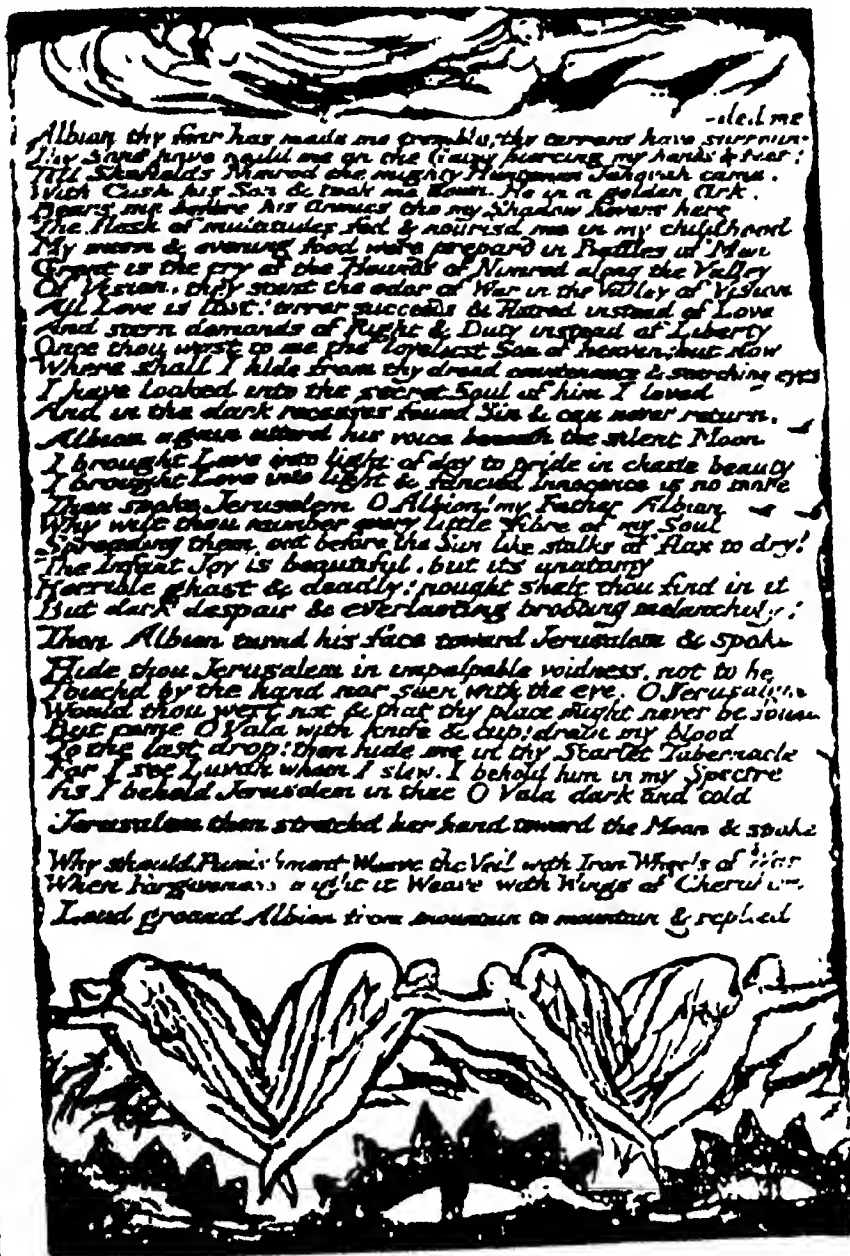
With the soul divided, the external world too gets split into false divisions. The Divine Imagination or Creative power could see things whole. The mind now comprehends incorrectly. The human form itself is no longer united for body, mind and emotions now separate and war with each other. The message is that "all love is lost" and Jerusalem's plea:

Why should Punishment Weave the Veil with Iron wheels of war
 When Forgiveness might it weave with wings of Cherubim

(J.22: ll.34-35 K., 645)

goes unheeded. The illustration too bears the message of destructive division, for in a plate whose criss-crossing angels remind us of Blake's introduction to the Zoroastrian temple frieze in Bryant's *Mythology*, we see black iron wheels separating the angels and their message of hope, creating a schism between the rational or scientific and industrial aspect of man and the emotional, intuitive aspect (See Plate 111).¹⁴ In great Eternity all aspects unite into a whole, here the wheels "turn upon one-another, To murder their own Souls" (18: ll.8-10, K., 640).

Albion is now cut off from those he needs most, and the created world has become:



An orb'd void of doubt, despair, hunger and thirst and sorrow

(J.18: 1.4 K., 640)

Light has fled from him as is apparent in the gloom of the illuminated plates. Albion's degradation is graphically presented in Plate 25 (See Plate 112),¹⁵ where Albion, on his knees, is being tormented by three female figures one of whom is drawing out his umbilical cord. While his plight at the end of the first chapter resembles that of a victim of Druid sacrifice, the floating female figure becomes an evil parody of the guardian Fravashi for here she is presiding over his spiritual disintegration. Albion's disintegration, though terrible, is still incomplete. Light, symbolised by the Sun, has left his forehead, it no longer guides him, but a small unhappy sun-face is still with him, painted above his right knee and twelve stars appear on his body. So far the light of the Cosmos has not entirely deserted him.¹⁶

Error and unbelief continue to grow as the poem progresses. Blake did not believe in the concept of sin. For him unbelief was the greatest crime:

We do not find any where that Satan is Accused of Sin; he is only accused of Unbelief and thereby drawing Man into Sin that he may accuse him. Such is the last Judgment--a deliverance from Satan's Accusation. Satan thinks that Sin is displeasing to God; he ought to know that Nothing is displeasing to God but Unbelief.

(*Vision of the Last Judgment*, 86-90, K., 615)

In Zoroastrianism unbelief is the work of the archdemon "Aka Manah," the "Evil Mind," antithesis of "Vohu Manah," the "Good Mind." By his prayers the Prophet undertakes to

drive out this demon from the world of righteousness, for when a man's mind is filled with faith and good thoughts it cannot fall victim to disbelief.¹⁷

The Spectre knows it can triumph only if Los and Albion despair. Once Albion refuses to believe in, or hope for goodness and mercy the spectre has him in its power. The spectre's world is one of vengeance, if Albion accepts this world he will long for self-annihilation. The greatest crime in both Blake's writings and Zoroastrian theology is this crime of despair for it negates the goodness and wisdom of the Creator and Los's spectre therefore tries its hardest to make Los too fall into Albion's kind of despair:

O that I could cease to be! Despair! I am Despair
Created to be the great example of horror and agony; also my
Prayer is vain. I called for compassion; compassion mock'd;
Mercy and pity threw a grave stone over me.

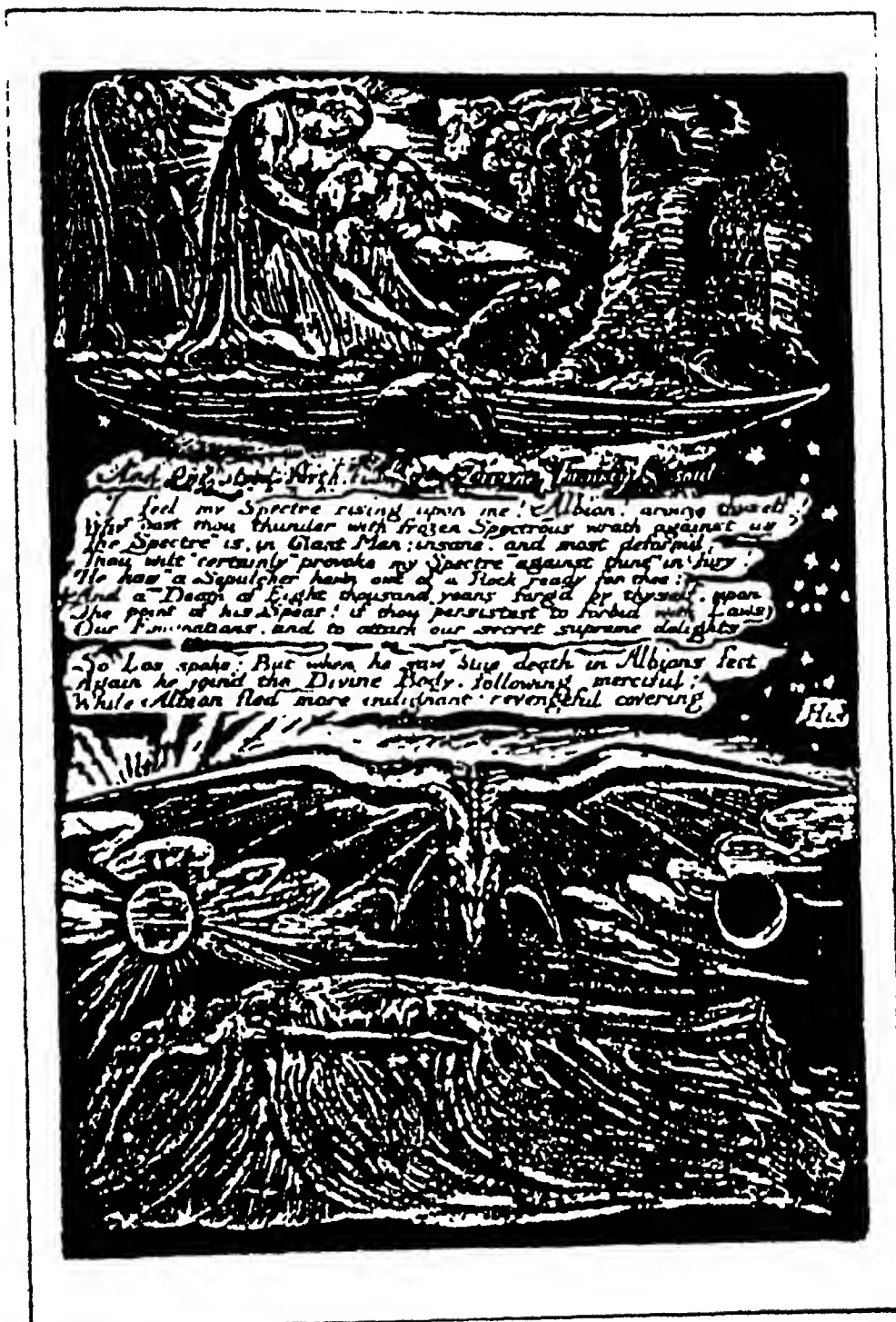
(J.10: 11.51-54 K., 630)

Unable to tempt Los, evil then turns to the task of destroying Albion now "Self-exiled from the face of light and shine of morning" (19:l.13, K., 641). The spectre uses Albion's own reason to deny all man's aspirations to ultimate divinity:

I am your Rational Power, O Albion & that Human Form
You call Divine is but a worm seventy inches long
That creeps forth in a night and is dried in the morning Sun.

(J.33: 11.5-7 K., 650)

The spectre continues to pervert Albion's faculties of reasoning and ultimately triumphs, Albion's fall is complete when:



Pl. 113 Jerusalem. Note dualistic use of flying figure.

Albion utter'd his last words Hope is banish'd from me.

(J.47: 1.1 K., 677)

The two extremes of hope and despair, Adam and Satan can be seen as the contrast between life and death, "in every Human bosom these limits stand" (35: 1.2 K., 662) and it is up to each individual either to choose the Truth or be beguiled by Error. This choice between good and evil is the fundamental basis of the Zoroastrian faith and it is significant that Plate 33 which has been discussed briefly in Chapter II is an illustration of both these contrary states (See Plate 113).¹⁸ On the top of the Plate there is a fainting Albion being supported by a radiant Los-Jesus figure. Both these figures, amidst a world of leafy trees, are supported by a life-giving winged disc the Persian emblem of Ahura Mazda Himself. While in Zoroastrian iconography the Fravashi with a human figure in the centre represents the guardian spirit protecting each individual, a winged disc is the traditionally accepted emblem for Ahura Mazda. Therefore in Blake's picture faith saves and preserves. In contrast, on the lower part of the page we see a bat-winged spectre brooding over a cold, still Jerusalem. Albion has banished Jerusalem but grace is still with erring man, if only he will awaken and accept it. Albion now seems desperately alone, devoid of all illumination. It has been said that when man dwells in God, then the cosmos is in man, he has the sun within himself. When God and man are separated the cosmos and man are separated too.¹⁹ Albion's eyes are still shut to the Divine Vision, he is at the point of total unconsciousness, the movement must now be towards the emergence of his consciousness from these depths of despair.

In 1788 Blake had written:

The Religions of all nations are derived from each Nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius which is every where call'd the Spirit of Prophecy.

(All Religions are One, K., 98)

Los, poetic genius and Spirit of Prophecy, comes to represent here that creative power which in a fallen world alone remains unfallen, steadily working at the task of leading Albion back to light and unity.

Los, as guardian of the furnaces, will use the power of fire to forge together the divided Albion and lead him to final union with Jerusalem. Just as Zoroastrianism has always identified fire with creation and energy Los is constantly seen as an earthly form of heavenly light. Zoroastrianism associates Truth with fire. Fire and light, both emblems of purity and righteousness, destroy evil, while only through truth can man attain perfection. Here too, in Blake's illuminations the truth comes from the creative furnaces. The "Divine voice came from the Furnaces" (35: 1.3 K., 662).

I go forth to Create

States, to deliver Individuals evermore! Amen

(J.35: 11.15-16 K 662)

The Sun, in Zoroastrianism is a visible symbol of God's creative fire. Controlling times and the seasons it represents the correct order of being, and as representative of the Sun-god Mithra, it is also seen as the foe of Sloth and inactivity, the stupor-like state into which Albion falls. Los stands for all these values in Blake's world:

... In my double sight

'Twas outward a Sun: inward Los in his might.

(To Thomas Butts 22 Nov. 1802, *K.*, 818)

From the very first plate of *Jerusalem* where Los carrying a fiery globe of light steps into Albion's fallen world, the light of the Sun represents Los bringing the saving light of truth to lost mankind. Through Los, fire and light become the agents of redemption. If man is to be released from his dark prison, the error into which he has fallen can only be destroyed through the power of light. Physical illumination is only one aspect, the other being the radiance beaming forth from the imagination of the poet-creator. Los must use his flames of energy to revitalise Albion. Erin, the Daughters of Beulah, and the Sons and Daughters of Los all work in his furnaces and even while mourning for Jerusalem create a vision of the world that is to be.

In the midst of destruction, only the power of the creative fires of Los can survive the wars of division and lead towards regeneration. Los tells Albion:

Thou wast the Image of God surrounded by the Four Zoas
 Three thou hast slain. I am the Fourth: Thou canst not destroy me.
 Thou art in Error; trouble me not with thy righteousness.
 I have no time for seeming and little arts of compliment
 In morality and virtue, in self-glorying and pride.
 There is a limit of Opakeness and a limit of contraction
 In every Individual Man, and the limit of Opakeness
 Is named Satan, and the limit of contraction is named Adam.
 . . . But there is no limit of Expansion; there is no limit of Translucence
 In the bosom of Man for ever from eternity to eternity.

(*J.*42: 11.23-36 *K.*, 670)

Because the fire of creative imagination is one with the Holy Spirit, it has the power to rebuild. Blake, in the first chapter of *Jerusalem*, had called Jesus "The God of Fire and the Lord of Love" (3: K., 621) and Los uses the might of the God of fire to forge the creative sword in his furnaces:

I took the sighs and tears and bitter groans
I lifted them into my Furnaces to form the spiritual sword
That lays open the hidden heart.

(J.9: ll.17-19 K., 628)

Los has the power of four-fold vision to aid him in his labours, only he sees the apocalypse that is coming:

I see the Four-Fold Man, the Humanity in deadly sleep
And its fallen Emanation, the Spectre its cruel shadow
I see the Past, Present & Future existing all at once
Before me. O Divine Spirit, sustain me on thy wings
That I may awaken Albion from his long cold repose.

(J.15: ll.6-10 K., 635)

The "globe of fire," "The flames of the Furnaces," the divine power of light and hope are contrasted as in *The Four Zoas* with the "clouds" "gloomy monuments" and cold of Urizenic evil. But, as in the Zoroastrian scriptures, the most important form of light is the divine spark within every being:

In great Eternity every Particular Form gives forth or Emanates

Its own peculiar light, and the Form is the Divine Vision

And the light is his garment. This is Jerusalem in every Man.

(J.54: II.1-3 K., 684)

For this light to emanate or be brought forth the contrary state of darkness has to be removed. Light in both Zoroastrian texts and in Blake's myth, as in the physical realm, always casts a shadow. In the myths, Ahriman and Satan originate in Ohrmazd's and Albion's accession to consciousness, for, in Jungian terminology, the dim dawn of consciousness from the unconscious engenders the "shadow" or dark side of the aspiring personality.²⁰ Thus, as in Zoroastrianism, so in *Jerusalem*, Blake shows us that in our world contraries necessarily exist. Fire's creativity involves an inherent destructiveness, only after accepting both aspects of life is man prepared mentally to move beyond, for "contraries mutually exist" (17: 1.32 K 639). Los's fires as part of the creative process have their contrary side in *Jerusalem* where fire also exists as a destructive element. Los's fires create, but the fires of the Sons of Albion destroy. There are "furnaces of affliction," and when the Daughters of Albion triumph even the Divine Vision seems to change from a creative light to a vehicle of horrifying devastation:

The Divine Vision became First a burning flame, then a column

Of fire, then an awful fiery wheel surrounding heaven and earth

And then a globe of blood wandering distant in an unknown night.

(J.66: II.41-43 K., 702)

Even "The sun is shrunk" and seems to lose its power for in their destructive aspect the furnaces become "furnaces of death "

All this makes it imperative that Albion awake and choose correctly. Zoroaster declares to every man:

Hear with your ears that which is the sovereign good;
With a clear mind look upon the two sides
Between which each man must choose for himself.²¹

This focus on the individual's responsibility shows that every man must choose his own faith. Blake too had realised that:

Whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces
Truth, a Last Judgment passes upon that individual.

(Vision of the Last Judgment 82-84, K., 613)

Here we see that *Jerusalem* is taking us towards this Last Judgment. Hence the free choice of each individual is all the more important. Truth and Error are contrasting states within Albion, personified by the figures of Jerusalem and Satan. It is up to Albion to choose between the two. Jerusalem, his emanation, wants Albion to move towards unity and perfection, Satan his spectre keeps dividing him and rejoices in his disintegration. Satanic flames are false, those of the anti-Christ who will attempt to build a city where the imagination and truth will be forever suppressed, while Los struggles to create Golgonooza knowing:

I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's
I will not Reason and Compare: my business is to Create.

(J.10: 11.20-21 K 629)

Los's determination to build a chariot of creative energy, a vehicle of life, leads to

With mild Physician of Eternity, mysterious power
 Whose springs are unsearchable & knowledge infinite.
 Herald, inviolate Guardian of Walsby which mirrors
 Boulders the mountain palaces of Eden stupendous works!
 Lincoln, Durham & Carlisle, Counsellors of Los.
 And Ely, Scribe of Los, whose pen no other hand
 Dare touch: Oxford, immortal Bard, with eloquence
 Diving he wapt over Albion: speaking the words of God
 In mild persuasion: bringing leaves of the Tree of Life.

Then got in Error Albion, the Land of Ulro:
 The Error not removed will destroy a human Soul
 Repose in Beulah's night, all the Error is removed
 Repose not on both sides, Repose upon our bygones
 Till the Flow of Jahweh, and the Harrow of Shudlin
 Have passed over the Dead, to awake the Dead to Judgment.
 But Albion averted away refusing comfort.

Oxford trembled while he spoke, then fainted in the arms
 Of Norwyck, Peterboro, Rochester, Chester awful, Worcester,
 Litchfield, Saint Neots, Landaff, Agha, Bangor, Sodor,
 Bowing their heads devoted: and the Furnaces of Los
 Began to rage, thundering loud the storms began to roar
 Upon the Furnaces, and lo! the Furnaces rebellion beneath

And thus the Four in whom the twenty-four appeared four-fold:
 Jerusalem, London, York, Edinburgh mourning one towards another
 Alas! the time will come, when a man's worst enemies
 Shall be those of his own house and family, in a Religion
 Of Generation, to destroy by Sin and Atonement, happy Jerusalem
 The Bride and Wife of the Lamb. O God thou art Not an Avenger!





c. Blake: The Chariot of Inspiration, *Journal of the Society of Friends of William Blake*, p. 17, 18, 19, 20.



d. Sculptures from Persepolis. After Ouseley's *Travels in Persia*, 1804.

the vision of the ox-hooved, lion-maned bulls, drawing a chariot interwoven with serpents which Erdman regards as "an emblem of continuing effort and hope amid futility" (See Plate 114).²² We see in the plate Blake's self-conscious determination to use every means possible and yoke together all the arts to produce his epic, in order to redeem and save Jerusalem, the lost soul. This plate in particular reveals how many sources intermingle to constitute Blake's illuminated work. In Zoroastrianism, the bull is a dominant symbol of what is beneficial and good, it is also seen as a symbol of power and along with the lion becomes representative of majesty.²³ Many years ago Anthony Blunt had discussed this, one of Blake's most magnificent pages, realising that Blake took the winged human-headed Bulls from those at Persepolis. While the Persepolis sculptures had been described since the sixteenth century and drawn and engraved by western travellers through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Blunt pinpoints Ouseley's *Travels* for the borrowing because the second volume, dealing with Persia, was published in 1821 while Blake was still at work on *Jerusalem*, and he feels that elements of Blake's composition follow Ouseley's picture. Blunt however realises that Blake was not copying a single model but combining several. He also mentions the engravings of Persepolis which, as we have seen earlier, Blake executed for the *Cyclopaedia* of Abraham Rees (See Plate 115).²⁴ Blunt calls Blake's illustration a "chariot of Inspiration"²⁵ for while Los and Enitharmon, the seated figures, ride with bowed heads indicative of the state of poetry in the divided world before the attainment of vision, nevertheless the winged genii riding on the Bulls holds a pen, symbol of poetry. Blunt feels that this is associated with a line on the next page: "Shudder not, but write, and the hand of God will assist you."²⁶

Even while this vision of the Chariot and the flames of the Furnaces sustain Los, he is still struggling in a divided world where the sons of Albion:

Take the Two contraries which are call'd Qualities with which
Every substance is clothed: they name them Good and Evil.

(J.10: ll. 8-13 K., 629)

The Divinity itself seems totally lost and the darkness of Plate 51 at the exact centre of the poem represents this powerfully. At this nadir even "the stones of fire" only serve to illuminate a dull despairing world. Vala rules from a black stone throne a court comprising of Hyle and Skofield. This plate (See Plate 116)²⁷ of utter gloom must be seen in contrast with later plates for its blackness will set off the renewal of light that is about to begin, with flames of illumination and rebirth.

At the conclusion of Chapter 2 Albion has sunk into total hopelessness but his "Death is for a period" (48: l.17 K., 677), and even as Albion collapses into the arms of a "merciful Saviour," "Maternal Love awoke Jerusalem" who :

With a dreadful groan the Emanation mild of Albion
Burst from his bosom.

(J.48: ll.47-48, K., 678)

Jerusalem has to resist Satan's aim of murdering the Divine Humanity, if she is to deliver men from "a world where Man is by Nature the enemy of Man" (49: l.69 K 680). Cast out by Albion she has become the only hope of redemption and in Chapter 3 the Daughters of Beulah call upon the Lamb of God to descend and "take away remembrance of Sin" (50: l.30 K., 681).

Chapter 3 is a turning point; hope is offered in the *Preface* itself for "The glory of



Pl. 116 The nadir of Jerusalem.

Christianity is To conquer By Forgiveness" (K., 683). The state of forgiveness implies a growth in wisdom. Both Ohrmazd and Albion had turned within themselves to find true knowledge, but in both this had at first led to the evil of selfhood. Only when this selfhood is destroyed can illumination be achieved. Zoroastrianism like most religions states that the spirit gains when she goes out from within and is prepared to annihilate herself for the common good, but loses when she is confined to the narrow limits of herself.²⁸ In Zoroastrianism, and Blake, as in essentially all religions, the selfish and egocentric are incapable of development, for only by defeating the selfhood can man develop to a higher state of integration with a larger imaginative unit which is ultimately God. From the very beginning of *Jerusalem* Blake has entered the poem to try and conquer the spectre of Albion which he sees as his own selfhood:

Spectre of Albion! Warlike Fiend!
 In clouds of blood and ruin roll'd,
 I here reclaim thee as my own,
 My self-hood! Satan! arm'd in gold.

(J.27: ll.73-76 K., 651)

Los too realises that only after conquering his pride and self-righteousness can he find wisdom. He has to

beat
 These hypocrite Selfhoods on the Anvils of bitter Death.

(J.8 ll.15-16 K., 627)

for now he knows:

Thou art my Pride and Self-righteousness: I have found thee out.

Thou art reveal'd before me in all Thy magnitude and power.
 Thy uncircumcised pretences to Chastity must be cut in sunder.
 Nor shalt thou ever assume the triple-form of Albion's spectre,
 For I am one of the living: dare not to mock my inspired fury.

(J.8 11.30-35 K., 627)

Los is successful, but Albion's spectre has triumphed, for he could not subdue himself to the Divinity. Even in a condition of death in life Albion will not believe in the truth of the Divine Vision. In his ignorance, uniting with his emanation and accepting God's forgiveness means destroying himself and he flees the Divine Vision. The cities of England pray for Albion as the age darkens into blindness and the signs of the time of troubles that precede apocalypse begin to appear. Los pursues his task of teaching the fallen Albion that the new Jerusalem within is "a tent and Tabernacle of Mutual Forgiveness" (53: 1.4 K 684), but Albion would rather believe in "the Reasoning Power in every man" (K., 685).

In Plate 55 the Eternals descend to sacrifice themselves for man in a reworking of the Zoroastrian myth where the Fravashis, or guardian souls, leave their blissful abode in order to assist Ahura Mazda against the Evil One; even as the Fravashis' descended in their tens of thousands, so the Universal Concave came down "Contending for Albion and for Jerusalem his Emanation." Albion still flees the Divine Vision but after he falls under the plough he begins to change. The terror of the event begins a process of renewal through which he is finally saved.

Jerusalem had always held onto the promise "Albion shall rise again" (29: 1.26 K 653) but the suffering before apocalypse is so intense that she almost begins to doubt her own faith:

Babel mocks, saying there is no God, nor Son of God
 That thou, O Human Imagination, O Divine Body art all
 A delusion.

(J.60: 1.56-58 K., 693)

but still she hopes:

I know thee, O Lord
 For Thou also sufferest with me, altho' I behold thee not
 And altho' I sin & blaspheme thy holy name, Thou pitiest me.

(J.60: 11.67-68 K., 693)

Comfort comes from the Divine Voice:

I am with thee always
 Only believe in me.

(J.60: 11.67-68 K 694)

and Jesus reassures her:

I Die and pass the limits of possibility as it appears
 To individual perception.

(J.62: 11.10-20 K., 696)

No longer is Jerusalem an "inarticulate" "raving" creature, she has become the Great Mother lamenting for her lost ones and in the comprehensiveness of her vision and her concern for the world she now approaches the position of Los. Los too "lived and breathed in hope" but at the same time Vala, in a striking similarity with the Persian demoness, Az, vegetates "into a hungry stomach and a devouring tongue" (64: 18 K., 698) and as the Plow of Nations thunders on, the human form itself seems to shrink. In a

parody of the longed for unification "all the daughters of Albion" and "all the males" unite in a false unification of deadly hate and jealousy while a sinister world of Druidic orgies and sacrificial altars decorate the illustrations. Only Los struggles with his hammer and as a half-sun rises on Plate 73 we realise that with his perseverance and faith Los will succeed. Los has learnt the truth:

In your own Bosom you bear your Heaven
And Earth & all you behold; tho' it appears without it is within
In your Imagination, of which this world of Mortality is but a Shadow.

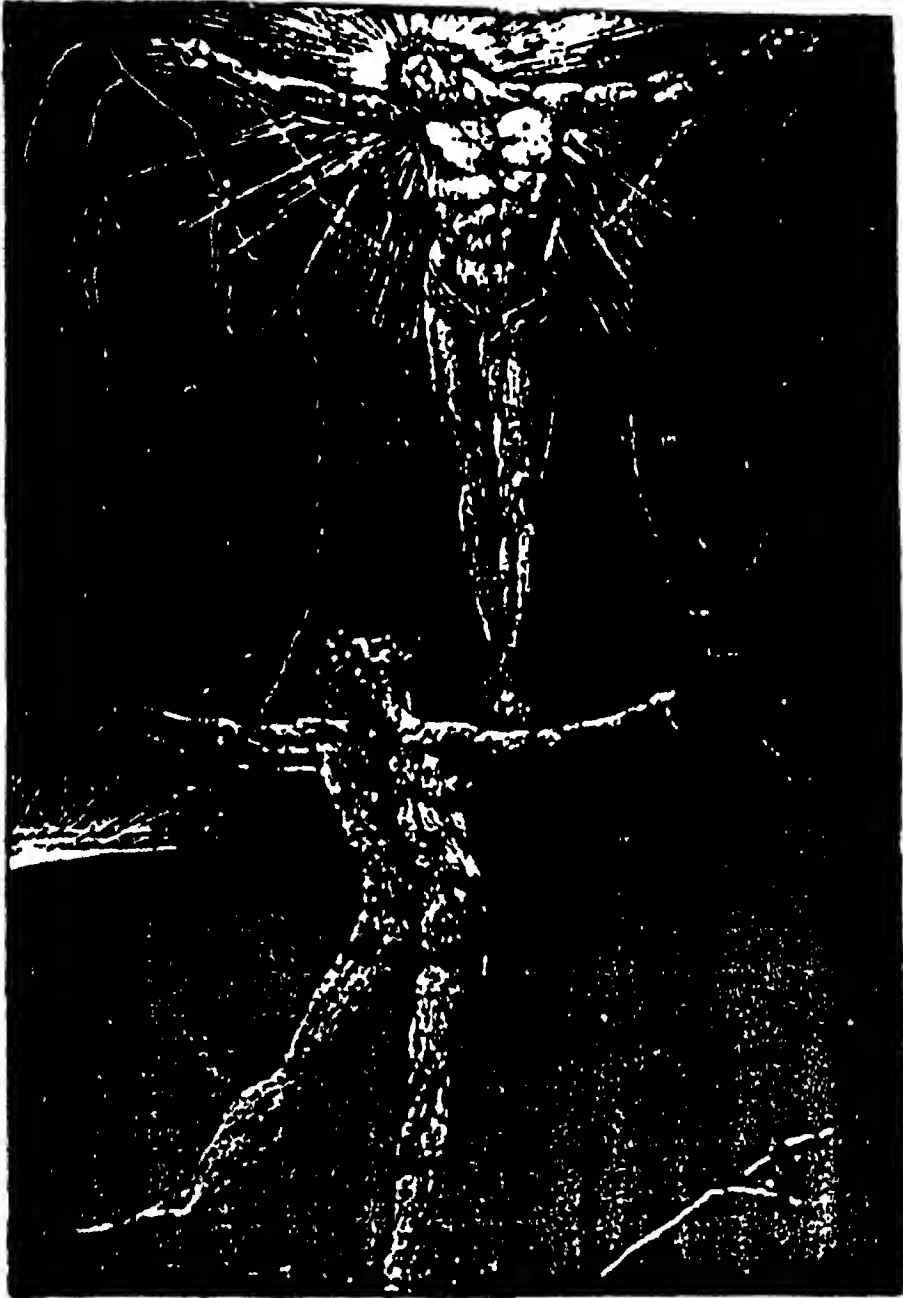
(J.71: ll.17-19 K., 709)

and so he waits patiently:

To awake the Prisoners of Death, to bring Albion again
With Luvah into light eternal in his eternal day.

(J.75: ll.25-26 K., 716)

Plate 76 depicts Christ's sacrifice for mankind, Christianity is the force of forgiveness which now breaks the chains of revenge and war as Jesus becomes the bodily victim crucified for the sake of Albion. Albion standing below the crucified Christ, with his arms outstretched becomes almost a mirror image of the Saviour and finally seems to recognise something beyond his limited selfhood. The picture is dark for Albion has still not awakened imaginatively to the concept of self-sacrifice and only a few beams of sunlight at the side of the page suggest that illumination is slowly beginning to penetrate Albion's deadened mind (See Plate 117).²⁹



Pl. 117 *Jerusalem.*

The final chapter opens with a clue that the night of death is past for a rising sun casts its light across the page. Jerusalem's song of desolation has stirred Enitharmon to action and she helps weave "the web of life" for Jerusalem while Los putting on "his golden sandals," goes forth to awaken all mankind. He carries the red globe of fire and as he walks from furnace to furnace his song of hope describes the world that is to be:

I see the River of Life and Tree of Life

I see the new Jerusalem descending out of Heaven.

(J 86: 11.18-19 K., 731)

Cleansing flames accompany Los as he now tries to come together with his emanation. But Enitharmon is still full of fear and jealousy. Even as the spectre tries to take advantage of this, Los

his heav'd Hammer, he swung round and at one blow

In un pitying ruin driving down the pyramids of pride.

(J.91: 11.43 & 44 K., 738)

While Enitharmon, fearing the loss of her identity, shrinks away in terror Los forgives her for the world can be renewed only, "by Mutual Forgiveness for evermore" and comforts her with the assurance of perpetual life. Los even forgives his spectre and we reach "That signal of the morning which was told us in the Beginning" (93: 1.26, K., 741).

Time is finished, the six thousand years of the earth's existence are over. Los has done his best to raise Albion from his stupor by showing him the falsity behind his spectrous doubt:

Will you suffer this Satan, this Body of Doubt That seems but Is Not,

To occupy the very threshold of Eternal life.

(J.93: ll.20-21 K., 741)

At last Albion comes to recognise the truth of the statement:

Each Man is in his Spectre's power

Until the arrival of that hour

When his humanity awakes

And casts his Spectre into the Lake.

(J.41: written within illustration K., 669)

To reawaken and reunite with the Divine Vision, Albion has to overcome the corruption of his body, mind, emotions and imagination. Finally, the Divine vision penetrates Albion's slumber and he awakens on his rock. Plate 95 is the opposite of the darkness of Plate 51 for Albion now walks into the world "clothed in flames" of renewal and the process of reunion begins:

Albion rose

. . . bright flaming on all sides around

His awful limbs; into the Heavens he walked clothed in flames.

(J.95: ll.5-7 K., 742; See Plate 118)³⁰

Albion has arisen, but complete illumination and knowledge of the truth comes when he forgets himself and is prepared to sacrifice his selfhood for the Divine appearance. Blake teaches the same self-sacrifice taught centuries earlier by Zoroastrianism, for only by negating the self can unity with Godhead be achieved. Jesus had begun the psychological reunification of Jerusalem by promising the "continual



Her voice pierd Albions clay cold ear, he moved upon the Rock,
 The Breath Divine went forth upon the morning hills, Albion repaid
 Upon the Rock, he opened his eyelids in pain; in pain he moved
 His stony members, he saw England, Ah! shall the Dead live again?
 The Breath Divine went forth over the morning hills, Albion rose
 In anger, the wrath of God breaking bright flaming on all sides around
 His awful limbs; into the heavens he walked clothed in flames
 Loud chattering, with broad flashes of flaming lightning & pillars
 Of fire, speaking the Words of Eternity in Human Forms, in deep
 Revolutions of Action & Passion, thro the Four Elements on all sides
 Surrounding his awful Members: Thou seest the Sun in happy clouds
 Struggling to rise above the Mountains, in his burning heat
 He takes his Bow, then chooses out his arrows of flaming gold
 Murmuring the Bombing breathes with ardor, clouds roll round the
 Horns of his wide Bow, loud sounding winds sport on the mountain brows
 Compelling Uryen to his furrow, & Thurmar to his Sheepfold:
 And Luyah to his Loom; Urthona he beheld mighty labouring at
 His Anvil, in the Great Spectre Lay unwearied labouring & weeping
 Therefore the Sons of Eden praise Urthonas Spectre in songs
 Because he kept the Divine Vision in time of trouble.
 As the Sun & Moon lead forward the Visions of Heaven & Earth
 In Island who is Britannia enters Albions bosom rejoicing
 Rejoicing in his indignation, adoring his wrathful rebuke.
 He who adores not your frowns will only loathe your smiles.

Forgiveness of Sins;" here he enables Albion to grow out of internal chaos with similar words:

Fear not Albion: unless I die thou canst not live;

But if I die I shall arise again and thou in me.

This is Friendship and Brotherhood: without it Man is Not.

(J.96: ll.14-16 K., 743)

When Albion sees the Covering Cherub bringing darkness in an attempt to divide them, he is terrified, but not for himself rather for his friend and guide. He performs his first selfless act:

So Albion spoke and threw himself into the Furnaces of affliction

All was vision, all a Dream; the Furnaces became

Fountains of living Waters.

(J.96: ll.35-37 K., 744)

With this act of love Albion's spectre vanishes along with his doubts and he stands ready for total union with his emanation, ready to receive again the divine spark of God. He assimilates into himself his sons and his cities, and Bacon, Newton and Locke appear in the heavens with Milton, Chaucer and Shakespeare. Urizen embraces and is embraced by his brothers. Once the Spectre and evil vanish no villains are left and the world is free. The contraries of reason versus intuition or imagination have at last come together. Both are now seen as a part of human genius, for true wisdom allies intellect and imagination into one whole.

The last part of the *Denkard* myth stresses the fact that Ohrmazd after conquering his doubt achieves total union within himself. After this, the darkness of the night will be no more, the sun will never set upon the Kingdom of Righteousness. The body of the Universe will be renewed and perfected because it will finally be purged of the malice and corruption of the aggressor. Within the Universe will exist only harmony and the resurrected bodies of all men reconstituted and transfigured will once again be united with their souls. Matter and spirit will be combined but the end of the cosmic drama is not a reversion to a state of undifferentiated being, it is rather that each separate, created entity will have grown and developed to its highest capacity. This glorious state will be achieved by each soul in full harmony and union with the whole human race which itself is transfigured in a beatific vision of God.³¹

Jerusalem draws to a similar conclusion. Blake believed:

Error is Created. Truth is Eternal. Error or Creation will be
Burned up and then, and not till then, Truth or Eternity will appear. It is
Burnt up the Moment Men cease to behold it.

(*Vision of the Last Judgment* 92-95 K., 617)

Therefore, as soon as Albion awakes out of his error, he achieves enlightenment. Albion knows now that God is the redeemer of man's errors, a God of love not of vengeance, and each man has to awaken to his own divine potential. Blake stresses the gathering of wisdom throughout the last chapter of *Jerusalem* for only through the light of wisdom can Albion achieve true union with Jerusalem. In Mazdean terms the Daena is the holder of a man's Xvarnah or light of glory and fate. Like Jerusalem the Daena is the image of light in the semblance of the soul and it is significant that light and glory enter Albion's consciousness and the illuminated plates as soon as Jerusalem returns to her Lord. In the

Prose Preface to Chapter 4 Blake had stressed the role of wisdom:

Can you think at all and not pronounce heartily that to
Labour in knowledge is to Build up Jerusalem and to
Despise Knowledge is to Despise Jerusalem and her Builders.

(J.77: K., 717)

and Los conclusively declares towards the end of the poem:

I care not whether a Man is good or Evil; all that I care
Is whether he is a Wise Man or a Fool. Go, put off Holiness.
And put on intellect.

(J.91: ll.55-57 K., 739)

Yasna 30.9 too speaks of the final transfiguration of the Earth in terms of a growth to wisdom: "And thus may we be like the Lords of Wisdom and of life who make over fresh and reclaim this our life on earth," and in the *Menok-i-Khrat* wisdom is clearly conceived as the creative word of God for it is the power through which God has brought this Creation into existence: "From the beginning was I, who am innate wisdom and at the final Rehabilitation, Ahriman and his abortions will be wiped out by the power of wisdom . . . Surely it is through wisdom's power and protection that the souls of the righteous . . . attain unto heaven and the House of Song."³²

Thus in both myths the growth to wisdom is identified with the growth towards an ultimate state of perfection. Ahura Mazda is wisdom personified, for only through the Spirit of Truth does man achieve knowledge of the world and true insight into himself. This truth also implies a destruction of the false laws of selfhood. When Jesus comes to Albion, man reaches full consciousness which links him to a new law of love, mercy and

forgiveness. Once Albion acknowledges the cruelty of his selfhood Jesus teaches him:

Man is Love

As God is Love.

(J.96: ll.26-27 K., 743)

God's ultimate mercy in both *Jerusalem* and Zoroastrianism lies in that the apocalypse is accomplished not by destruction but by regeneration. Error has been exposed and therefore no longer has any powers of disintegration, and the world of generation is not annihilated but moves to a higher plane where it is transformed into eternity.

That Blake's visions of eternity appear to him on Primrose Hill and in South Moulton Street is very important. It is the evidence for his belief that earth is not barred from Paradise, that perception is most important, and that this earth itself is blessed. Blake had once considered Creation as the lowest point of the Fall, but while he occasionally reverted to this view, as he developed his myth he insisted on the goodness of Creation, for it is the first step upward from the nadir. Creation becomes then the gathering together of scattered forces which find a purpose, and eventually, united and perfected, emulate Paradise or eternal reality. Plutarch records that it is a Magian belief that at the time of the Renovation, mankind will speak one language and have one commonwealth. Men will live without food and will cast no shadows.³³ In Blake's terminology Albion's divided cities come together and with the spectre vanishing the dark side or shadow of the personality is annihilated. Men become like the Immortals, forever joyful in the Kingdom of God upon earth. It is this familiar world restored to perfection that is the Zoroastrian Paradise, man's own well-loved surroundings, not some remote new state. There can therefore be no destruction of the Universe for every minute particular is sacred be it "Lion, Tyger, Horse, Elephant, Eagle, Dove, Fly, Worm," every

form is identified with the Creator and is Holy:

All Human Forms identified, even Tree, Metal Earth and Stone: all
Human Forms identified, living, going forth and returning wearied
Into the Planetary lives of Years, Months, Days and Hours; reposing
And then Awakening into his Bosom in the life of Immortality.

(J.99: II.1-5 K., 747)

Plate 97 reminds us of the Los we had seen in Plate 1: There Los had stood with a globe of fire about to enter the cavern of Albion's darkened consciousness. Now Albion stands as Los, holding the Sun in his hand he looks out, not into a dark cavern but at a brightly lit infinity. Los's long journey leading Albion out of darkness has been successful (See Plate 119).³⁴

Zoroastrianism sees the contraries of good and evil or spiritual disharmony come to an end with the destruction of Ahriman. At the final Renewal, the Lie is conquered and the contraries end, for now only Truth will prevail. The Frashokereti or Final Rehabilitation is also the time of making excellent and raising the Tan-i-pasen, "the perfected body." The "first body" of creation is now a totally integrated complex of individual unities and each man, and the whole human race, following God's plan or khratu have arrived at perfection. Creation was never random, but followed a purpose and an aim set out by Ahura Mazda's directive Intelligence. Finally the wisdom embodied in His will has fulfilled the task of Creation. The *Denkart* stresses this interpretation of the Rehabilitation, particularly its solidarity and reconstituted harmony

for, "this perfect unity in perfected diversity" is the essence of the resurrection.³⁵

Conquest of evil means the conquest of death which is separation and division. Now spirit and matter are fused into infinity. Albion is no longer divided, he is reunited with his emanation and with his Four Zoas. Plate 99 shows the fusion of the body and soul, we have the flames and illumination of the consummation as Albion and Jerusalem come together in joy and mutual self-surrender, and as Albion arises, perfected we recall the Zoroastrian promise of the coming of Peshyotan, the man with the perfected body, who "is undecaying, hungerless and thirstless, living and predominant in both existences, those of the embodied beings and of the spirits."³⁶

Plate 100 recalls to us the first Plate. There Los, searching for the real Albion had belonged to the mortal world, as was signified by his clothes and lamp. The nude figures here have shed the trappings of mortality and are now in eternity. In this last plate which concludes *Jerusalem* Los stands at rest, his instruments of labour in the furnaces stand beside him; he has completed his task. This Plate bears witness to the fact that the central focus of this poem has been on images of work and action, opposing sleep and inaction. Man's salvation is achieved through creative work. The central figure shows this for Los has used his hammer to break down falsehood and his furnaces to forge a new united world. Albion and Jerusalem along with all mankind have achieved unity, the furnaces have forged a new consciousness of the eternal truths. In the background, Albion having reached true consciousness, stands bearing the round globe of perfected vision. Sun, moon and stars all brightly illuminate this picture, and while earlier critics have seen Stukeley's Serpent Temple in the background as representing even the serpent humanized, we can see in the shape and exact proportions of the figure another example of the Zoroastrian Fravashi emblem which Blake first saw in Bryant, as

Pl. 120 *Jerusalem. Final Plate.*



it straddles the picture proclaiming a divine benevolence overseeing all the affairs of mankind (See Plate 120).³⁷

II

Blake had in his three long epics gathered together aspects from myths and legends across the world. But in his own way he had also been faithful to the thought of his time, for as Norman O. Brown writes:

It is one of the great romantic visions . . . that the history of mankind consists in a departure from a condition of undifferentiated primal unity with himself and with nature, an intermediate period in which man's powers are developed through differentiation and antagonism (alienation), with himself and with nature, and a final return to a unity on a higher level or harmony.³⁸

The romantic sickness is a fracture of individuality and the coming into being of conflicting, isolated fragments. Blake represented this by the myth of the disintegration of man due to doubt and self-centredness. Romantic philosophy is primarily a philosophy of integration, of bringing back the perfection of a golden age, after the end of division, opposition and conflict. But the return is not to just the innocence of the beginning, it is a growth and return to a "higher" innocence, a more superior plane of values. The Romantic dream is not circular, for as M.H. Abrams describes, the typical Romantic movement:

Fuses the idea of the circular return with the idea of linear progress, to describe a distinctive figure of Romantic thought and imagination--the ascending circle, or spiral.³⁹

So the synthesis which follows when divisions are reconciled is higher than the original unity, for there has been a growth in wisdom, an assimilation of diverse forces, a movement from simple to complex unity. While in simplistic terms Romantic yearning is a nostalgia for a lost Eden, Blake aspires towards a harmony and integrity much higher than the world that was lost. Zoroastrianism stresses that the perfected world preserves diversity and individuality, the most important issue being that the new world is achieved not because of an a-priori given condition, but this universe of light and joy has been earned by the incessant striving of each and every individual along a very difficult path. Only after the strenuous effort of man does the renewal of the earth culminate in perfection. From the initial act of Self-consciousness, in both Blake and Zoroastrianism, good implies unity, while Evil is linked with separateness. Through the struggle with evil, and the unity that comes with self-knowledge, man grows in wisdom from partial or imperfect knowledge to true illumination. All of Blake's Prophetic writings, his great myth of Albion, the Four Zoas, and the innumerable confusing figures who appear and disappear on his pages, are part of this plan. Ultimately his "Human Form Divine" with its imaginative faculty, annihilates all selfhood and incorporates the Deity into itself. The universal reintegration and jubilant apocalypse ushers in the joyous felicity of an eternal spring.

III

Blake seems to have initially come to know of Zoroastrianism through the illustrations he saw in many travellers' and antiquarians' accounts and through the Plates he engraved for Bryant's *Mythology*. It is, therefore, fitting that before concluding we

consider the Zoroastrian influences on the illustrations Blake made for *The Book of Job*, Blair's poem *The Grave*, and *The Vision of the Last Judgment*. In the first two works Blake's comments are made entirely by quotation, but by his choice of plates and his mode of illustration a profound commentary is made. This makes these works not merely a series of illustrations but almost an independent form of creative art.

The Illustrations to the Book of Job was the last complete work of William Blake and these "Inventions," charting the spiritual life of man in the form of the Biblical story, are the climax of his career as a symbolic artist. The *Job* story always fascinated Blake. As a young man Blake had produced a pen and wash drawing of Job and his friends, he had quoted from it in *The Gates of Paradise* and *The Ghost of Abel* and made it the subject of a set of water colours for Thomas Butts, followed around 1821 by another set for John Linnell. Linnell commissioned these as engravings which were finished after about two years and published in 1826, a year before Blake's death. In this work Blake was summing up the task of his great Prophecies, to "justify the ways of God to man," and as in all his work and his life, trying to understand the issues of good and evil. But the Biblical Book of Job while raising the question of suffering, leaves it unanswered on the grounds that God cannot be held accountable to man. Job, the upright and just man, suffers undeservedly but survives due to the strength of his faith. His reward comes, but he never comprehends either the cause or cure of his pain and only endures it stoically.

Blake's interpretation of the legend is a refutation of the idea that Job's catastrophe is a cruel test of his faith. Here the importance of the marginal texts must be emphasised,

because while many are from The Book of Job, some are not; Blake uses texts from Genesis and Revelations, and as such these are indications of his thoughts. God in the Bible, descending in a whirlwind, leaves Job more prosperous than before, but the Biblical version leaves the problem of evil unsolved. For Blake, Job's suffering comes from a failure of understanding. Job has been content to live a life of outward piety, self-satisfied with his charities and prayers and has come to believe that this superficial apprehension of the world is reality. His is the innocence of ignorance. To come alive spiritually he has to comprehend correctly. That comprehension reaches him only through suffering. Unlike the *Denkart* myth and Albion's Four-fold divisions in the Prophecies, Job has not doubted the Divinity, he has not created a monstrous Spectre to torment himself; but neither has he understood the truth. Only when he grows in wisdom and comes to the point of true spirituality does he deserve and obtain the restoration of happiness.

In the *Laocon* Blake had said "All that we See is Vision" (K., 776) but Job has to learn at first to look correctly, and see clearly in order to understand. All Blake's major works centre around the need to grow spiritually and Job suffers perhaps because of his self-righteous belief in his own goodness. This is the form of his selfhood. It is this which leads to his separation from grace and his Fall. The remainder of the *Job* story is the renewal of what has been lost when, finally, a higher state of grace is reached. Job's salvation occurs here on this earth, for he will discover imaginative perfection within his own mind and body.

The title page of *The Illustrations*⁴⁰ shows the path of Experience which Job has to tread; symbolised in the Seven Eyes of God, descending and reascending, it represents the path of Job's sun which will sink down and disappear to rise again only at the end. Job's fall downwards is to be a fall of inner experience for the seventh eye of God, or

Jesus, forms the inward turn in this design. That Job's trial is also a test of his imaginative or creative powers can be seen by the fact that the angels hold scrolls and one holds a quill, for to Blake, creative expression can lead to redemption. The apparent serenity of the scene in Design 1 depicts Job in the state of innocence. Job and his family gather in positions of superficial prayer, prayers by the Book not the spirit as we can see by the books open on the laps of Job and his wife, and the words from Corinthians on the altar in the border "The letter killeth, the Spirit giveth Life." Job turns his eyes upwards imagining himself in perfect communion with God, but irony is apparent in the very opening words, "There was a Man in the Land of Uz whose Name was Job and that Man was perfect and upright." The illustration belies perfection, for the sun is setting and musical instruments or instruments of creativity hang unused, dismissed by the Biblical Job as belonging to the pastimes of the wicked. Crowds of sheep emphasize Job's wealth and solid-looking tents offer shelter, but Blake's words from *The Four Zoas* come to haunt the mind:

It is an easy thing to rejoice in the tents of prosperity.

(l.417 K., 291)

Therefore, at the beginning of Blake's *Job*, we realise that the patriarch deluded by material blessings, has failed to see correctly. His God is as Job perceives him to be, an exact image of a stern, self-satisfied Father, for Job suffers from single vision. Only when all his faculties grow into wisdom will he reach enlightenment.

Blake's Job fears God, and thereby fails to know Him, permitting in Plate 2, thoughts of Satan to cross his mind. Job's God is a God of Terror expecting the fawning obeisances of those around him and Job, his image, is isolated even in the midst of his family, leading in Plate 3 to the destruction of his sons. Job denounces his sons for

taking mistresses and the inward disintegration of the family is matched by Satanic hell-fire and destruction. Plate 4 continues the disasters, for even as messengers bring tidings of death, in the margin, Satan, armed with a sword, enters Job's soul. Andrew Wright's commentary on Plate 5 tells us that in the depiction of Job's charity--the giving of half a loaf with his left hand to a poor man--we see that Job's illusion of self-importance necessitates his trial.⁴¹ An energetic Satan, having asked for and obtained permission from God to try Job, now comes carrying a phial of spiritual poison to subvert him, and the smiting of Job with boils pictures a tortured Job tormented equally by "the disease of shame" and by a vigorous Satan triumphing at his anguish. The spiritual torture continues with the arrival of Job's Comforters, three accusers who, convinced he is being punished for his sins, sit in judgment over the "sinner." An exhausted Job realises that before disasters entered his placid life, he too was like these friends and his anger is at last aroused, for in the next plate he curses the day he was born.

This anger marks the beginning of his awakening from the stupor into which he had fallen. No longer will Job passively accept his affliction for his spirit has been aroused to protest. Job is not tempted to succumb to unbelief, but he demands an answer which comes in Plate 9, where, "A spirit passed before my face the hair of my flesh stood up." The Vision of Eliphaz is bordered with words that point to the rebuke laid upon Job by his friends, "Shall mortal man be more Just than God? Shall a Man be more Pure than his Maker?" but while Job has been wrong to think himself invulnerable, Eliphaz is wrong in supposing the Creator to be a remote jealous god. When even his wife seems to move away from him, Job appeals to God for some justification and in the terrible Revelations of "Job's Evil Dream" he realises that in imagining God in his own image he had been guilty of creating a terrible, Satanic selfhood, the false god whom he had been

worshipping. Hope has however returned for "I know that my Redeemer liveth . . . yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Elihu now appears--a young man, he is the new spirit of prophecy, for the wisdom of tradition, as represented by the "friends," has failed. Elihu is one who has developed correct perception and Job's soul is now brought back from the abyss, "to be enlightened with the light of the living," while Job and his wife prepare to receive God. The Lord appears in a whirlwind of mystical force, as a vision of glory and harmony. Job's own wisdom is awake, his faith confirmed. He has developed his imagination to look beyond physical and emotional sufferings to the vision beyond, he has realised that the only real death is spiritual death--that alienation from eternity which he had suffered even while he believed himself especially blessed by the Lord in his days of wealth.

With this we come to the great Plate of the Creation; the perfected world which comes into being once Job acknowledges the Divinity within. God stands at the centre of the design, evil has been banished. In the margin on the sides we view the six days of Creation, and in the lower margin the worm of death is crushed. As Job's illumination continues God explains the mystery of the warfare and strife in our world. Behemoth and Leviathan, represent the dualities and contraries present in existence but, as is stressed in Zoroastrianism, these contraries are of this world alone, beyond lies the unity of God, so even these monsters fit into the great plan once the "doors of perception" are opened. With this true perception Job conquers the fear of evil, Satan is cast out and with him fall the errors suffered by Job and his wife. Flames of annihilation consume them as evil is burnt out and completely destroyed. God appears to Job and his wife who face Him, not with fear, but with a firm faith. Job becomes aware of the potential divinity within himself "I and my Father are One." His friends are, however, terrified, they have not

reached illumination, and this vision is beyond their comprehension.

In the Plate of Job's Sacrifice, the sun has risen to its central position in the sky, as Job, in a spirit of forgiveness, prays for his friends. The flame of his self-sacrifice and inner virtue pierces the clouds and reaches up to the heart of the Sun-Divinity, for having learnt the wisdom of true perception, Job's sacrifice is accepted by the Heavens. In the margins ripening wheat, musical instruments, a palette and paints suggest that creativity has returned to earth. Job had lost virtue by giving condescendingly to a beggar, in the next Plate he regains the affections of his neighbours who come to him in true charity. Pride has been conquered and roses of love and lilies of innocence⁴² decorate the margins. The creative arts have returned to their central position and vine leaves curl luxuriantly over the next page where Job transforms his suffering into art as he recounts his life-story to his daughters. Job's arms are outstretched protectively over his children as he comes to the end of his story. In the final Plate, Job purged of all error, stands restored to even greater prosperity. His family is reunited in harmony, the musical instruments no longer hang silently, but are used to praise the Lord. Job has consciously experienced one-ness with God, and in this divine vision of true or perfected innocence he has achieved life everlasting. The night is over, the Sun has risen and "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning."

In 1924 S. Forster Damon was the first to comment on Zoroastrian symbolism in *The Book of Job*. He was discussing Blake's extreme development in this work of the traditional significance of the directions "left" and "right." The right has been seen as auspicious, the left sinister from earliest times till today, the right hand a place of honour, for in all the last Judgments the Blessed ascend on the right hand of God, the damned fall on His left. Blake interpreted this as the difference between the spiritual and the base, and the use of the right or left hand, the exposure of this or that foot throughout Blake's

Job shows clearly the spiritual attitude of any character. This symbolism is today commonly accepted in many cultures, but as Foster Damon points out, "The symbolism can be traced back to ancient Zoroastrianism. The Gnostics laid great stress on it; from them it passed into the Kabbalah."⁴³ Job's acts of error are always committed with his left-hand, he gives half a loaf of bread in apparent charity, but the left-handed giving negates the value of the act. Job's comforters arrive, left-foot first, but God blesses Job out of the whirlwind by advancing his right hand in benediction.

While this may seem a minor point, if we turn to one of Blake's greatest designs we see the culmination of an idea which Blake having seen in boyhood, developed throughout his life. Spiritual ecstasy is given its most splendid form in the Plate "When the Morning stars Sang Together," Blake's final statement on a theme he had worked out with many variations. Both Anthony Blunt and Geoffrey Keynes realised that Blake originally derived this from the Zoroastrian plate "Zor-Aster Archimagus before an altar," taken by Bryant from Kaempfer's *Amoenitates Exoticae*. As we have already seen, this frieze of figures with arms upraised and crossed was used by Blake in the *Night Thoughts* design, in the third illustration to Milton's "Hymn on the Nativity," in the water colour of "David delivered out of many waters" from the Butts collection, and in several plates of *Jerusalem*. Plate 14 of *Job* shows four figures with one pair of wings each, clad in short skirts of flowing gauze resembling the short tunics of the Persian frieze. As in that frieze, the row of figures suggests a line going much beyond the frame of the engraving stretching out to infinity.⁴⁴

In this plate (See Plate 121)⁴⁵ Job has come to realize his own place in the larger scheme of things. As his spiritual self is revealed to him he sees a vision of creation, a perfecting of the imagination where art combines with spirituality to create a supreme design. Below the pencil sketch of this great piece Blake put a "symbolic" signature.

The words "Done by" followed by a series of symbols (1) a straight line standing, in Keynes's opinion, for immortality (2) a hand (3) a 'B' for Blake (4) an eye (5) a circle or perfect symmetry. According to Keynes this signature indicates Blake's belief that this drawing, the climax of great effort, was created by the Poetic genius in his own person. The inspiration of this design could only come from a Divine source, that of the Poetic Genius whose perfected imagination represents God (See Plates 122-123).⁴⁶

The plate itself depicts the joyous creation, with God at the centre of the design, arms outstretched in a position of benediction and protection, much like a guardian Fravashi's outspread wings. God's right foot protrudes from the hem of his garment and the Sun and Moon, God's creations of light, flank his sides. The whole forms a design of the Universe, with God, the divine Imagination, at the Centre. In the margin are the six days of Creation framing this, the seventh and last, which is the spiritual rebirth of man. Flames of God's power annihilate evil beneath the central scene, while the formation of the luminaries or celestial spheres, the earth, water, plants, animals, particularly the Bull, seen in the picture in the margin echo the design of creation found in the *Bundahishn*. Besides this, two other Plates have Zoroastrian echoes. Plate XVI (See Plate 124)⁴⁷ "The Fall of Satan" depicts Satan falling into a crack in the centre of the earth. Evil is cast into flames of total annihilation, not everlasting torture for, as in Zoroastrianism, such torment was not a part of Blake's plan. The *Bundahishn* describes this scene:

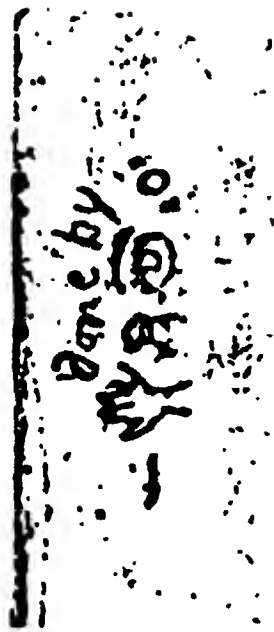
Auharmazd seizes on the evil spirit and by the passage through which he rushed into the sky he runs back to gloom and darkness . . . The stench and pollution which were in hell are burned . . . Auharmazd sets the vault into which the evil spirit fled in metal . . . and the renovation arises.⁴⁸

The Third plate (Plate XVIII) "Job's Sacrifice" (See Plate 125)⁴⁹ depicts Job, in the form of an almost Magian priest, praying before a fire altar up in the mountains. It

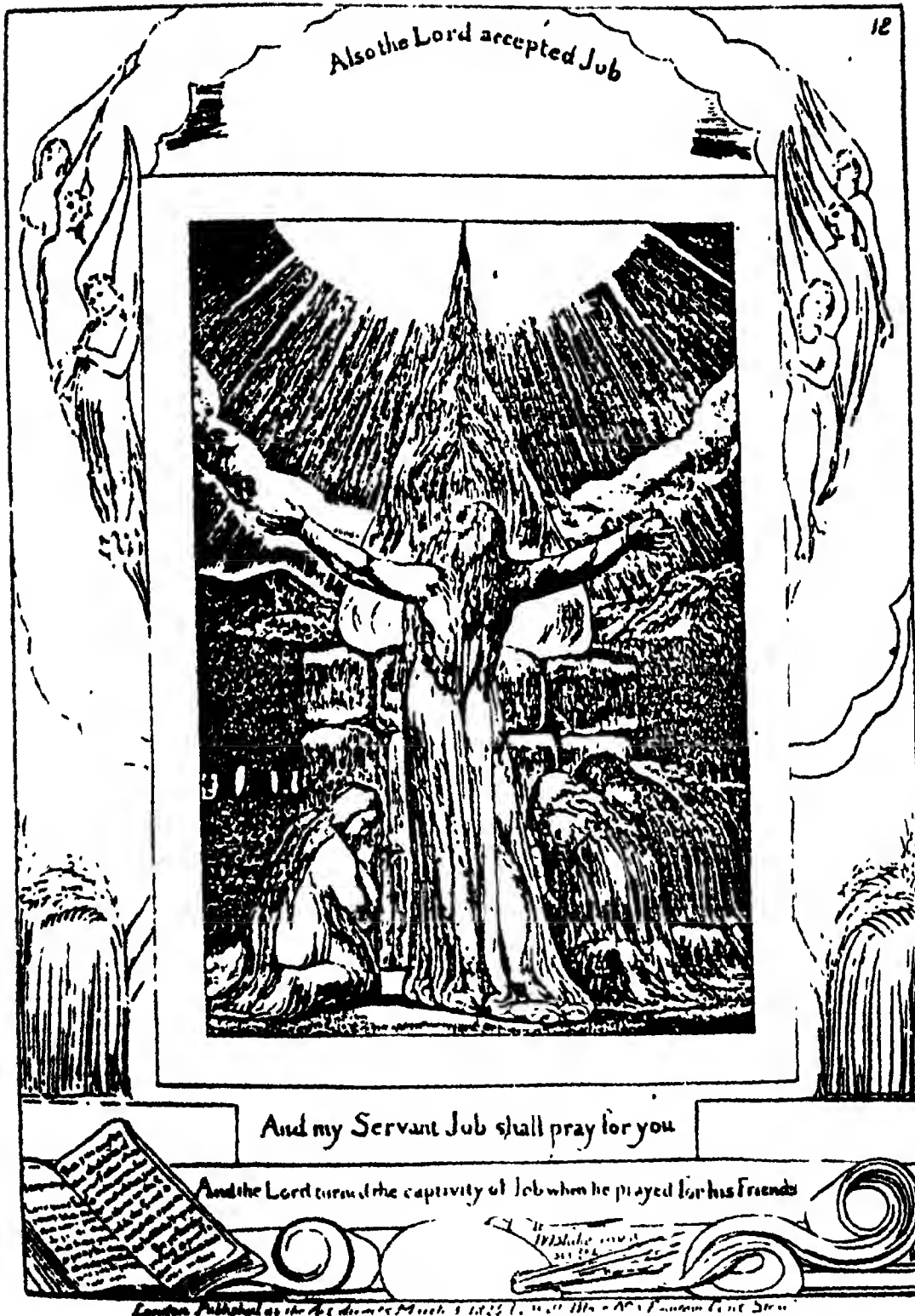


Pl. 122 Pencil sketch for *Job*. Note "symbolic" signature at bottom.

PL 123 Close-up of "symbolic" signature from *Job*. Pencil sketch.







brings to mind Strabo's statement on the Magi "The Persians . . . do not set up statues and altars but sacrifice in a high place. They hold in honour the sun . . . and the moon, fire, earth, winds and water. They sacrifice in an open space . . . They say God needs the soul . . . but nothing else." Porphyry too in his *Life of Pythagoras* states expressly "Ahura Mazda's body is the Light and His Spirit, Truth."⁵⁰ In Blake's plate God has withdrawn from complete manifestation as man, to the likeness of a great Sun in the heavens. In Zoroastrianism, the body of the Deity constitutes light, for light is the manifestation of Divine Wisdom, and Job's flame of sacrifice pierces the clouds to reach up to God. Fire becomes the spiritual means of ascension, a symbol of the soul rising upwards to the Sun in prayer: "The most luminous of all luminous bodies is yours O Ahura Mazda, clothed in the most exalted of all exalted heavenly lights, none other than the Sun. . . ." ⁵¹

Job has learnt to see correctly, he no longer fears God but stands upright facing the Almighty. It is an important part of Zoroastrian ritual that man comes before his Maker, not kneeling or cringing in supplication, but hands outstretched and standing upright in prayer. The leaping flames of the heart-shaped fire on the altar indicate that Job's prayer is accepted. This scene reminds us strongly of the *Atas Nyayis*, the Hymn to Fire: " . . . give me, O Atar . . . now and for ever, a seat in the bright, all-happy blissful abode of the holy ones," and the blessings of Atar descend on Job:

May herds of oxen grow for thee, and increase of sons, may thy mind be master of its vow, may thy soul be master of its vow, and mayest thou live on in the joy of the soul all the nights of thy life.⁵²

IV

Robert Blair's *Grave*, written before the *Night Thoughts*, though published in the same year (1743), was a popular English classic. Blake's designs form a spiritual commentary to the matter-of-fact poem of the Scottish divine, lifting the poem far beyond its author's imagination. The plates have sometimes little foundation in the text, but the series of designs themselves form a sequence. It is ironic that these, some of Blake's greatest designs, were engraved by Louis Schiavonetti, because Robert Cromek wanted to ensure the popularity of his book and did not trust Blake with the engravings. Dedicated to Queen Charlotte, Blake expressed his deepest beliefs in a work which brought him very little money, despite great labour. At a time when the Blakes were financially impoverished, this book must have roused strong but contrary emotions in the artist, for although Blake's portrait forms the frontispiece, and his own poem is the dedication, his name comes after the engraver's on the title-page.

Blair's poem stressed the vanity of human aspirations, his setting was that of the horrors of the grave. Blake reversing his meaning, refused to degrade death, which he saw as a part of the divine plan. Blake's dead are at rest, his souls depart peacefully from the body in a flat contradiction of the horrors indicated in the text. Blair's work lacks form, but Blake's designs are organised so as to show "The regular progression of Man, from his first descent into the Vale of Death, to his last admission into life eternal."⁵³ While the text preaches despair, Blake's designs reveal a vision of hope.

The series begins with the coming of a radiant, gentle Christ descending with the Keys of Liberation to remind mankind of its divine origin. Thick rays of light fan outwards from the figure while flames of renewal form the base of the Plate. The second plate represents the descent of man into the vale of Death, where all types of humanity

move downwards, some hesitating others moving with more faith. "Death's Door" represents a design which Blake had developed in different forms over the years. An old man enters his rocky tomb, while above him, his spiritual form, in the shape of a youth, gazes upward at heavenly glory. Other plates display contrasting approaches to death, and a plate depicting the soul exploring the recesses of the grave is followed by one where all humanity--Kings, Mothers, warriors and children--rest silently together. With the reawakening at the Last Judgment man's skeleton arises, his spectre and emanation come together. Reunion between families follow and at the very end is the casting out of error and the last Judgment passed on all mankind.

In an Essay, Crabb-Robinson realises that Blake gave equal importance to the body and the soul, "his greatest enjoyment consists in giving bodily form to spiritual beings," and sees that in *The Grave* Blake "has represented the reunion of soul and body and to both he has given equal clearness of form and outline." Crabb-Robinson found it "offensive" to see "the soul, a copy of the body, yet in altered guise," hovering over the death scenes,⁵⁴ while Allan Cunningham was shocked at the nude archangel blowing a trumpet and Robert Hunt at the depiction of the reunion of a family. Lamb writing to Bernard Barton on May 15, 1824, professes amusement at "The parting of the soul and body," and mocks "a solid mass of human form floating off, God knows how from a lumpish man left behind on the dying bed."⁵⁵

It is obvious from these comments that Blake's concepts, not only of the soul and body, but also of death and the hereafter were very different from those of even well-read and sensitive Christians of his time. For Blake the "soul" like the Zoroastrian Daena, is an essential part of the individual, a feminine emanation, which though perhaps relegated to the background during mortal life, is constantly present as man's inspiration and takes

up her rightful place in the forefront at the time of death. She emerges to join the spiritual body, the Zoroastrian Fravashi, when the complete individual has attained eternal life. Blake's emphasis is on the growth, unity and integration of every aspect of being, and in the illustrations of Blair's *Grave* he comes very close to the Zoroastrian concept of the death of an individual. To quote Wilhelm Geiger:

Nowhere does the belief in future life after death stand out more prominently; nowhere are the ideas respecting it expressed more decidedly and carried out in all their details more fully than among the Avesta people. Here the doctrine of immortality and of compensating justice in the next world forms a fundamental dogma of the whole system. Without it, the Zoroastrian religion is in fact, unintelligible.⁵⁶

According to Zoroastrian teachings, the future, spiritual state is regarded as the most cherished of all possessions, an eternal beatitude when the believer enters the Abode of Light and Bliss. At the dissolution of the body, the soul is liberated to a higher state of existence. The phenomenon of the separation of the body and soul is momentous and full of distress, for the soul, released from the limitations of physical consciousness enters and must grow into its own self-conscious state. At death the soul is bewildered due to its change of environment and needs help. The passage from the material to the spiritual world is graphically described for the Daena, personification of the soul's inner character, appears to lead it onwards. Zoroastrian cosmogony emphasizes that the whole universe, and all things, including men, have material and spiritual counterparts; the future of man's spiritual life being dependent on his character and conduct during his life on earth. The soul ascends into heaven in four stages. She travels through the stations of the Stars, the Moon and the Sun, corresponding respectively to good thoughts, good words and good deeds and reaches finally the Supreme Paradise situated in the realm of Anaghra-Raochao, Everlasting Light. In the *Gathas* Garo-Damana, the abode of



Pl. 126 "The Death of the Good Old Man."

Pl. 127 "The Death of the Strong Wicked Man"





Heavenly Song where the souls of the righteous remain, is the home of Ahura Mazda Himself. He is synonymous with the Kingdom of Light into which his devotees enter by observing His Divine Laws. As opposed to these realms of Light and bliss, is the world of Drujo-Damana, or the House of the Lie, the abode of the worst Mind (Achista Mana) where the followers of wickedness will suffer for their sins until the final judgment and purging of evil.

Blake's title page to *The Grave* depicts a very Zoroastrian concept, for, as an angel's trumpet call arouses the dead, the bones of skeleton's join to arise into a new state of being. In *The Bundahishn* the coming of the Soshyant, or Saviour, prepares man for the raising of the dead and, as seen before, when Zoroaster asks Ahura Mazda:

When does a body form again, . . .

Ahura Mazda answers:

At that time one will demand the bone from the spirit of the earth, the blood from the water, the hair from the plants and the life from fire, since they were delivered to them in the original creation.⁵⁷

The bones of Gayomard, first man, are initially "roused up," followed by those of Mashya and Mashyoi and then those of the rest of mankind. Every man will "Stand up . . . from the spot where its life departs."⁵⁸

"The Death of The good Old Man," "The Death of the Strong Wicked Man" and "The Soul Hovering over the Body reluctantly parting with life" (See Plates 126-128)⁵⁹ are central, in their symbolic similarities, to Zoroastrianism. Simply, the contrasts of the first two plates show how, while the good old man has recognized his spiritual aspect and can depart peacefully to eternity, the wicked man, who has suppressed his feminine inspiration or imaginative and religious aspect, departs in terror of the unknown. In *The*

Gathas the Prophet had defined the conclusion of these two kinds of existence:

If you, O Men, understand the commandments which the Wise One has
given

Well-being and suffering, long torment for the wicked and salvation for
the righteous-

All shall hereafter be for the best.

(*Yasna*, 30.11)⁶⁰

In these pictures we see these two differing approaches to death. According to Zoroastrian teachings at the death of the body the soul does not begin its journey into the next world immediately, for its separation from the body takes place by slow degrees. It requires three full days and nights before the last earthly bonds are broken. During this period the soul stays on earth, taking its seat near the spot where the head of the deceased rested and where a light is kept burning. If the soul is of a righteous individual it spends its time in prayer singing the *Ushtavati Gatha* of Bliss and awaits the reward of its good deeds. The reverse happens in the case of the wicked soul who cries out in bewilderment and confusion dreading its fate. The journey of a sinner is fraught with difficulty for all creation rises up against him in retribution:

For when he commits sin against water and vegetation, even when it is committed against merely a single twig of it, and he has not atoned for it when he departs from the world, the spirits of all the plants in the world stand up high in front of that man and do not let him go to heaven.⁶¹

It is this type of retribution that terrifies the wicked at death, but enables the good Man of the plate to face the end with equanimity.

The plate of "The Soul Hovering over the Body" is the most significant in its

Zoroastrian symbolism. Zoroastrianism tells us that on the dawn of the fourth day after death the journey of the soul begins. The soul sets out hesitantly, but the good soul soon finds itself in a region of beauty where a sweet scented breeze blows and draws it towards the Chinvat Bridge, the Chinvato-peretu literally Bridge of the separator, or the Bridge of Judgment. Three archangels Meher, Sarosh and Rashnu await to judge the soul. This Bridge of Discrimination is highly symbolic for when the soul of the good man passes over, it widens to permit a comfortable passage, but for the sinner it narrows to a razor's edge:

The Chinvat Bridge is like a sword . . . one of whose surfaces is broad, one narrow and sharp. With its broad side, it is so ample that it is twenty-seven poles wide, with its sharp side it is so constructed that it is as narrow as a razor's edge. . . . It becomes a broad crossing for the just for the wicked it [is] just like a razor's edge.⁶²

Further along the way a man's own good deeds come to meet him in the form of a maiden more beautiful and fair than any on earth, and when the soul asks her identity the answer is, "I am no maiden but thine own good deeds," while the souls of the wicked face an ugly hag, "I am no girl but thy deeds and evil religion."⁶³

If we examine Blake's third plate carefully we see a pensive soul, ready to depart on her journey as dawn breaks on the mountains in the background. In Zoroastrian cosmology Ushidarena is the Mountain of the dawns, made of crystal ruby, the substance of the heavens, it is the first point on earth to be lit up for it is "the treasury of the dawn." It is also symbolic, for "the mountain first lighted up by the rays of the dawn also enlightens intelligences, since dawn and intelligence are one" (Usha-Ushi). It is by the light of dawn that the soul testifies regarding its earthly existence before the three judges at the Chinvat Bridge, "The souls are in the light of dawn when they go to render their

account. Their passing takes place through the splendid dawn."⁶⁴ It is all the more important to stress that Blake pictures a scene of such serenity, because Blair had described the departing soul as shrieking in horror. In the plate, even as the soul lingers yearningly for a moment before leaving forever the stiffened mortal frame we can see through the window not only the mountains lit with the dawn but a stretch of water separating two shores, with a bridge-like structure crossing in between. Blake himself had experienced his first illumination when he saw the soul of his beloved brother Robert rise from the death-bed clapping its hands in joy at the release, but the picture here is far more pensive and more in accordance with Zoroastrian scriptures.

Three other plates have Zoroastrian links. "Deaths Door" which has been associated with Christ entering Limbo, (See Plate 129),⁶⁵ shows an aged physical body tottering into a sepulchre while above the youthful spiritual body wakes, transfigured. This is in keeping with the Zoroastrian belief that after the Final Judgment all souls become immortal and ever youthful:

That whoever has been the size of a man; they restore him then
with an age of forty years; they who have been little . . . they restore
them with an age of fifteen years.⁶⁶

Just as the Zoroastrian concept of the "Tan-e-pasin" is symbolic emphasizing the raising of a "perfected" body, the ages given to "immortal" beings are also symbolic, for the age fifteen is seen as the threshold of maturity. The perfected body is the mature being, one who is responsible for the self.

"The Meeting of a family in heaven: (See Plate 130),⁶⁷ is also important in the Zoroastrian context because there is nothing in Blair's text which even hints at this happy event. Here the family is shown as an extension of the individual and therefore a reunion is a necessary event in Eternity. One need only quote the *Bundahishn*:



*... and a Night a hour and moments A part
make a man's life and for a man.*



The meeting of a Family in Heaven

Pl. 130

"The Meeting of a Family in Heaven."

Pl. 131

"The Resurrection of the Dead."





Afterwards, with the greatest affection, all men come together, father and son and brother and friend ask one another thus: "Where hast thou been these many years; and what was the judgment upon thy soul . . . and they give every one his wife and show him his children with the wife; so they act as now in the world, but there is no begetting of children."⁶⁸

Another plate, rarely seen (see Plate 131)⁶⁹ depicts a similar gathering of families. This "The Resurrection of the Dead" was designed as an alternative to the title-page of Blair's grave but never engraved.

We now come to the apocalyptic "Reunion of the Soul and the Body" (See Plate 132),⁷⁰ where the emanation or Daena meets the physical body arising from the grave and they both unite in flames of creation, renewal and joy. This event, which occupies the final stage of all Blake's longer Prophetic Books, is very powerfully depicted. The body and soul come together in an apocalyptic union, and man arises from the flames of renewal perfected and eternal. This is not a mere physical reviving for this act of rebirth fits in with the concept of the "tan-i-pasen," or making excellent of the perfected body. All disharmony has now ended and a final and perfect form achieved. The soul and body totally integrated represent the solidarity and reconstituted harmony of all creation in a resurrected life.

Blake made several designs on the subject of the last Judgement. While "The Day of Judgment" is perhaps the simplest, it clearly shows that Blake could not accept that at the Final Judgement sinners will be condemned to everlasting torture. This idea was for him a total contradiction of all the teachings not only of Christianity, but of humanity itself. For him, as for the Zoroastrian, the final revelation of Truth would be a time when all errors are cast out and destroyed:

arises in the universe this earth becomes an iceless, slopeless plain."⁷⁶

There is no suggestion of re-absorption into an original godhead; the rich variety of numberless creations will remain forever with separate individual existences. This importance which Zoroastrianism gives to the individual at the end of time is a humanism faithfully maintained many centuries later by Blake.

V

Zoroaster's teachings emphasised the importance of deeds, for salvation depends on works alone. *A Vision of the Last Judgment* too stresses the importance of acts committed by the individual, at the time of the spiritual awakening of every aspect of the human race. *A Vision* was meant to be added to Blake's *Descriptive Catalogue* when he planned to hold another exhibition after the failure of 1809, but this was never accomplished. The actual picture we have was done for the Countess of Egremont but the explanation given of this great concept in the letter to Ozias Humphrey on 18 January 1808 and in the *Descriptive Catalogue*, is more important, for it is Blake's clarification of many basic issues. There were a number of pictures and sketches he had made for this scene, most of them swarming with figures; rising, falling, separating, and again joining, in movements which parallel the actions of characters in the long Prophetic Books.

As we have seen Blake refused to accept an end to history which separated mankind forever with labels marked "Good" and "Evil." The accusation and revenge that such a Judgment implies did not fit into Blake's reading of Christ's gospel on the forgiveness of sins. In the 1808 explanation of his picture, Blake depicts Christ seated on



Pl. 133 *A Vision of the Last Judgment.*

his Throne of Judgment surrounded by fires and Angels even as "The earth is convuls'd with the labours of the Resurrection" (K., 443). The "left" and "right" symbolism continues for on the left "hell opens" while "the right hand of the Design is appropriated to the Resurrection of the Just." A "Sea of Fire," flows before the steps of the throne where "some are scourged by spirits with flames of fire." Children and families of the good rise "in exultation," as the graves of the Blessed open and:

Parents and Children, Wives and Husbands, embrace and arise together
in exulting attitudes of great joy.

(K., 443)

The Lord's supper in the upper part of the Design is like the great sacrificial Yasna "an introducer[s] into Eternal life" (See Plate 133).⁷⁷

In 1810 Blake placed his comments on *A Vision of the Last Judgment* in his *Note Book*. There he stressed the psychological aspects of the final dispensation for "its vision is seen by the Imaginative Eye of Every one according to the situation he holds" (K., 604). To Blake as to the Zoroastrian, the Last Judgment is a "Vision" or coming into being of what is eternally true:

The Oak dies as well as the Lettuce, but the Eternal Image and Individuality never dies . . . , so the Imaginative Image returns to the seed of Contemplative Thought; the writings of the Prophets illustrate these conceptions of the visionary Fancy by their various sublime and Divine Images.

(K., 605)

In a statement which recalls all Zoroaster's teachings on the Fravashis as spiritual prototypes of the body, Blake tells us:

There Exist in that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every
Thing which we see reflected in this vegetable glass of Nature.

(K., 605)

and as at the Frashokereti, or Making Excellent, Blake too throws "off the temporal so that the Eternal might be Established."

The picture Blake goes on to describe contains many elements he had developed in the Prophetic Books. We see Cain and Abel, who started off earthly division with their jealousy and hate, we see figures from the Bible; Creation, Destruction, and the Saviour. What is constantly stressed is the Zoroastrian idea of eternally permanent individual being:

In Eternity one Thing never Changes into another thing. Each Identity is
Eternal.

(K., 607)

In Zoroastrianism every stone, mineral, flower or worm, all creation has its own Fravashi, or spiritual form, that will shine forth in its perfection at the end of time. Just as before the Frashokereti the earth shakes and the hills collapse, so in Blake, "The Earth is rocky and burning and seems as if convuls'd by Earthquakes," and as in *The Bundahishn* myth, hell opens "where sin and death are to be closed Eternally" (K., 608).

The role of Fire is stressed at every stage of Blake's Last Judgment, for the act itself is an "Eternal Consummation," in the flames of which we watch the gathering together of families be they "a youthful couple awaked by their children" or "an aged Patriarch awaked by his aged wife." "Purifying flames" cover all civilization even as it advances towards the throne of God while "The Morning Stars Sang together" (K., 611).

The Last Judgment is necessary to Blake "because Fools flourish" (K., 612). Only when the wise rule, both nations and the Arts, can true creativity be achieved on earth. In a telling personal comment Blake confesses:

Some people and not a few Artists have asserted that the Painter of this Picture would not have done so well if he had been properly Encourag'd. Let those who think so, reflect on the State of Nations under Poverty and their incapability of Art; tho' Art is Above Either, the Argument is better for Affluence than Poverty; and tho' he would not have been a greater Artist, yet he would have produc'd greater works of Art in proportion to his means A last Judgment is not for the purpose of making Bad Men better, but for the Purpose of hindering them from oppressing the Good with Poverty and Pain by means of such vile Arguments and Insinuations.

(K., 612)

After this personal outburst Blake harks back to the Zoroastrian concept of the Soul or Urvan being the chooser or discriminator in man. It is the Urvan who, surviving death, is held responsible for the actions committed during life. It is the Urvan who leads man to ultimate triumph by casting out doubt and error, the lures of falsehood for:

Whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth, a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual.

(K., 613)

Once Ahura Mazda has cast out and destroyed evil, the dualities or contrary states no longer exist:

Here they are no longer Talking of what is good and evil, or of what is Right or Wrong . . . but are Conversing with Eternal Realities.

(K., 613)

In another close link with an idea in *The Bundahishn* Blake tells us of those who "tho' willing, were too weak to Reject Error without the Assistance and Countenance of those Already in the Truth; for a Man can only Reject Error by the Advice of a Friend or by the Immediate Inspiration of God" (K., 614). At the end of *The Bundahishn* when all men view their own deeds a similar situation is described:

In that assembly whatever righteous man was friend of a wicked one in the world, and the wicked man complains of him who is righteous thus: 'Why did he not make me acquainted, when in the world, with the good deeds which he practised himself?' if he who is righteous did not inform him, then it is necessary for him to suffer shame accordingly in that assembly.⁷⁸

The Universal divine essence or Fravashis of every atom of creation have always existed. Even Zoroaster was present in the spiritual or ideal form of his Fravashi before he was born on earth. This concept links up with Blake's statement, "Eternity Exists and All Things in Eternity, Independent of Creation which was an act of Mercy" (K., 614).

This brings us to an important idea one which forms the basis of Blake's great myth as well as that of the *Denkart* story. *The Gathas* have told us that "Confusion came upon them [men] as they stood in doubt" causing man to choose "the Worst Mind" (Yasna 30.6). Blake too emphasises here the idea that Doubt caused Evil to enter our Universe: for man's evil aspect or Spectre is ultimately doubt within himself:

We do not find anywhere that Satan is Accused of Sin; he is only accused of Unbelief and thereby drawing Man into Sin that he may accuse him. Such is the Last Judgment--a deliverance from Satan's Accusation.

(K., 615)

Similarly, just as the Zoroastrian reaches the world of light and song by developing true wisdom, Blake says: "Men are admitted into Heaven not because they have curbed and govern'd their Passions . . . but because they have cultivated their understanding. The Treasures of Heaven . . . are . . . Realities of Intellect. The Fool shall not enter into Heaven let him be ever so Holy" (K., 615). Once Chisti or the ray of perceptive wisdom is awakened and illumines the mind, truth becomes eternal for Error is destroyed. Blake then sees the Last Judgment as a final division, not of good and evil, but of truth and error. God does not reject the individual, but the false state of the soul, which once separated from truth annihilates itself. The flames of the Zoroastrian purgation enter into Blake's *Vision* and burn up Error, for when man opens his eyes to God error cannot survive, "it is Burnt up the moment Men cease to behold it" (K., 617). The last judgment then is not only an apocalyptic concept but a psychological choice man experiences every moment; the choice between good thoughts, words and deeds, a Paradise on earth even when in the body, or a self-created Hell. A body does not hold back access to the realms of light and must not be condemned as evil. True vision, four-fold vision, sees an inner world of spirit within the frame of a beauteous, bountiful earth and this finally binds together both Blake and Zoroastrianism.

The Last Judgment is not a discarding of the body as something at worst evil, at best unnecessary, for "everything that lives is holy" and true vision sees not only the unity but also the divine purpose behind every aspect of life:

For everything exists & not one sigh nor smile nor tear

One hair, nor particle of dust, not one can pass away.

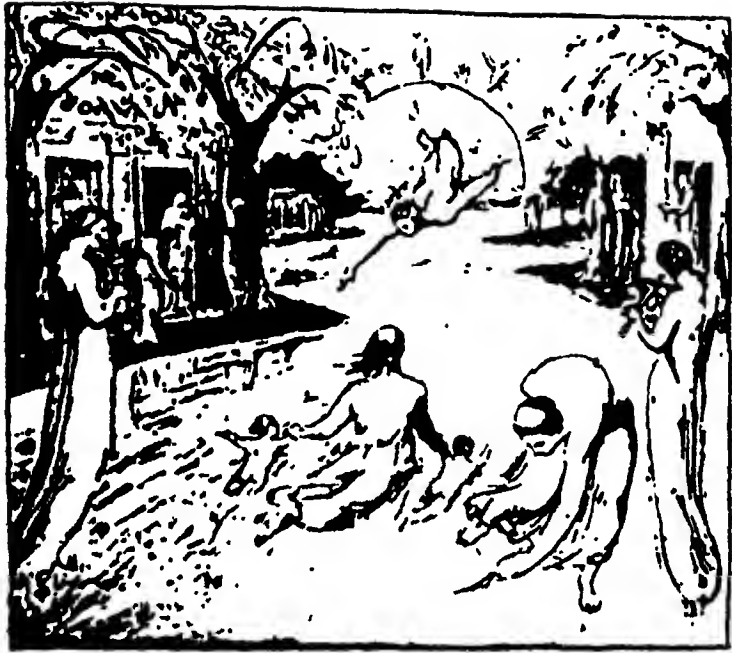
(K., 634)

VI

As we conclude looking for links between Blake and Zoroastrianism, particularly in the concepts of death and the hereafter, one important water colour must be considered (See Plate 134).⁷⁹ Painted in 1805, *The River of Life* has a Biblical allusion. It depicts the scene from the end of Revelations. Within the Zoroastrian framework, it brings to mind the Zoroastrian river of molten metal which seems to become like warm milk lapping around the innocent, blissfully conveying them to the Divinity in the Abode of light and Song. Blake's painting, as seen at the Tate Gallery, shows a river of water so white, it could well be milk, and as a happy mother and her innocent children float forwards, they are accompanied by musicians. Even as the threads of life are cut by the stooping figure, they unconcernedly float onwards for their eyes are fixed on a radiant golden sun rising ahead, where angels and glorious beings await to welcome them home.

Blake was "a man without a mask; his aim single, his path straight-forward, his wants few." He had no "tricks of littleness" nor "the least taint of affectation,"⁸⁰ for him heaven was watching little children at play.⁸¹ Yet he saw visions which led him and have led us to the strangest of symbols in the remotest of lands. His visions were, perhaps, private versions of literary and historical conventions and ideas available during his time, and he used myths from across the world to explore and extend his boundaries of thought, gathering together contradictions and often creating great confusion in his aim of proving the unity of all being. To him, the perfect world or Golden Age, was not past, to be longed for with nostalgia; it was a spiritual reality to be created by correct action, when spirit and matter could both be seen in their unity by the cleansing and perfecting of one's own sight.

For the true Zoroastrian death is not to be feared, nor is it to be welcomed with deprecating remarks about the corruption of this our world. It is a stage like any other,



Pl. 134 *The River of Life - Watercolour.*

be accepted, secure in the knowledge of one's own inner deeds and strength. This was Blake's attitude when he commented just before he died:

I cannot consider death as anything but a going from one room to another.⁸²

Many of Blake's works have been lost. There was a *Vision of Genesis* from which he read a passage to H. Crabb-Robinson in 1826,⁸³ while many other titles and references remain untraced such as Wilkin's translating the *Bhagvad-Gita*. Perhaps Blake never put these down on paper, perhaps they were conceived in the imagination alone, but if they exist, any one of these lost books or papers and notes might cast great illumination upon the sources of his ideas and myths. When we see how valuable Blake's casual jottings are, even when in the margins of the books of other authors, we realize the extent of the damage caused by Tatham and his contemporaries who destroyed and disposed of Blake's works as it suited their idea of correctness. Yet Blake's poetic achievement is magnificent, and besides this, his most significant contribution to thought is the realization which comes to his reader that nothing has one meaning. He uses his staunch faith in Christianity to interpret myth and religious knowledge taken from across the world. He truly unites the verbal and the visual to fulfil the traditional aim of composite art bringing together religion nature and man.⁸⁴ Nothing in the poet refers only to one single source, or one event, for Blake was a visionary who, gathering together the collected wisdom of the world, unified and transmuted it, leaving a message which takes humankind back to the Divine Vision centuries after his death. In achieving this he fulfils the role of a genuine Prophet.

Notes

¹ Corbin, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, p. 30.

² Quoted in S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*, p. 209.

³ Harold Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse*, pp. 404-5.

⁴ Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* (rpt. 1969), pp. 357-58.

We look back to see where the reversal of perspective occurred, but find nothing very tangible, and after so much churning the mere silent appearance of the expected butter may seem almost an anticlimax.

⁵ Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, pp. 220-21. The symbolism of four-foldness as seen in Ch. V is found in many cultures. In the western world the Greek tradition stresses the number four. Agrippa too constantly harps on it and says "The Pythagorians call the Number four Tetractis, and prefer it before all the virtues of Numbers." The four-fold nature of reality is also to be found in Paracelsus' work and Blake was undoubtedly influenced by these accounts. See, Hirst, pp. 52-63. However the four-fold movement of Blake's myth of creation from Doubt to Unity and the emergence of True consciousness out of introspection seems to follow very closely the Persian model.

⁶ Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism* I, p. 97. All cultures, Eastern and Western have a mythical First man, the source of all being. In Hinduism the *Vedas* stress the role of Purusa by whose great sacrifice the universe evolves. See Miller *The Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas*, pp. 81, 205-08. In the Kabbalah Adam Kadmon is the

Primordial archetypal man who preceded Adam Protoplastes, the earthly man. Blake in the Preface to *Jerusalem II* addressed "To The Jews" clearly indicates that he knew the Jewish tradition. See Hirst pp. 62-64. Blake's Albion is then a version of this great archetypal figure.

⁷ Plate 108 Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 285, Plate 6. While the illuminations follow the Erdman text unless otherwise stated, [] indicate Keynes numbering of the plates with reference to the illustrations.

⁸ It is significant that the idea of the Halls of Los resemble the Halls of God which the holy man reaches in the Chariot of Fire found in Jewish Merkabah mysticism. See Paley, *Energy and Imagination*, pp. 258-59. Considering the connection between Zoroastrianism and Merkabah mysticism direct and indirect sources combine in this concept, while the "bright sculptures" remind us of the fabulous originals which Blake saw in vision and rendered into works of art.

⁹ Harold Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse*, p. 409.

¹⁰ By the end of the eighteenth-century Jerusalem had become a symbol bound to strike a responsive chord in the imagination of believers in revealed religion. Literally "City of Peace," Richard Brothers even planned to rebuild the city in accordance with a plan divinely revealed to him. Many other minor prophets of the time used the term Jerusalem to signify the blessed and primitive state of innocence and belief. Jerusalem therefore became a personification of a future or eternal heaven centred in the English Island.

¹¹ Mellor, *Blake's Human Form Divine*, p. 296.

¹² Plate 109 *Le Bruya* Vol.II, pp. 124-25, 146. Plate 110 See *Marg. Persepolis*, Vol.XXIV, No.4, Sept 1971, pp.44, 14 & 20. The twelve petalled rose which forms a long border on some of the engravings can give the impression of Blake's "wheels."

¹³ See R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (1960; rpt. Harmondsworth, USA, Australia: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 162.

Laing while discussing a state of "chaotic non-entity" says:

The best description of any such condition I have been able to find in literature is in the Prophetic Books of William Blake. In the Greek descriptions of Hell, and in Dante, the shades or ghosts, although estranged from life, still retain their inner cohesiveness. In Blake, this is not so. The figures of his Books undergo division in themselves. These books require prolonged study, not to elucidate Blake's psychopathology, but in order to learn from him what, somehow, he knew about in a most intimate fashion, while remaining sane.

¹⁴ Plate 111 Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 301, Plate 22D.

¹⁵ Plate 112 *Ibid.*, p. 304, Plate 25O.

¹⁶ For a discussion on this point see Henry Lesnick "Narrative Structure and the Antithetical Vision of Jerusalem" in David V. Erdman & John E. Grant ed *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, p. 393. A minor but significant link between this illustration and Persian mythology is found in Dio Chrysostom with whom Blake was acquainted through Bryant. He tells us that upon the Magian horses "The Sun and the Moon are visible as distinct signs . . . some crescent shaped others of a different kind." See

Sherwood-Fox & Pemberton, trans., *Passages in Greek and Later Literature Relating to Zoroaster and Zoroastrianism*, p. 49.

¹⁷ Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Theology*, p. 50.

¹⁸ Plate 113 Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 312, Plate 33.

¹⁹ Nicolas Berdyaev, quoted by J.G. Davies, *The Theology of William Blake*, p. 103.

This idea though universal is found stressed in Vedic and Buddhist systems of belief.

²⁰ Quoted in Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, p. 221.

²¹ Duchesne-Guillemin, trans., *The Gathas*, Yasna 30.2, p. 103.

²² Plate 114 Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 320, Plate 41 {46D}.

²³ Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism II*, p. 106.

²⁴ Plate 115 Anthony Blunt, "Blake's Pictorial Imagination" *Journal of the Warburg and Courland Institutes* Vol. VI (1943). The Warburg Institute: London, pp.205-07,

It is also important to remember that in 1821 Sir Robert Ker Porter published his magnificently illustrated *Travels*. In this work are found perhaps, the best illustrations of Persia, with many Plates of "Nakashi-Roustam" and Persepolis. These include illustrations of the man-headed bulls drawn with painstaking detail. The author also gives many details of his discoveries, incorporating legends and myth with the religion of

ancient Persia. This book which contained Ker Porter's travels recorded from 1817 onwards also includes the plates which Blake later copied probably from Le Bruyn for Rees *Cyclopaedia*. Sir Robert Ker Porter in the second volume of his work discusses the *Zend-Avesta* and the "Boundehesh" and speaks of those books of the *Dabistan* and *Desatir* "lately discovered by that great Orientalist Sir William Jones" (p. 53). Blake could very well have had Ker Porter's work before him as he worked on *Jerusalem* and his final account of the myths and illustrations from far off Persia. What strengthens this argument is the fact that around 1806 Blake produced some designs for Shakespeare which were never engraved. They were, according to Gilchrist, bound up in a Second Folio of Shakespeare which was executed for the Rev. Ker Porter who himself contributed some designs. If Blake had this link with Ker Porter it is all the more likely to have influenced his works. See Gilchrist, *Life*, p. 240.

²⁵ Anthony Blunt, *The Art of William Blake*, p. 38.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 205-06, FN.

²⁷ Plate 116 Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 330, Plate 51D.

²⁸ Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Theology*, p. 34.

²⁹ Plate 117 Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 355, Plate 76D.

³⁰ Plate 118 *Ibid.*, p. 374, Plate 95D.

³¹ Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, p. 222.

³² Quoted by Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, p. 14, and Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight* (Menok-i-Khrat), pp. 290-91.

³³ Plutarch, quoted by Dhalla, *Zoroastrian Theology*, p. 182.

³⁴ Plate 119 Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 376, Plate 97D.

³⁵ Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, pp. 318-19,

³⁶ E.W. West, trans., *Pahlavi Texts: Part V, The Dinkard VII*, pp. 69-70.

³⁷ Plate 120 Erdman, *Illuminated Blake*, p. 379, Plate 100E.

³⁸ Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death*, quoted by Morton D. Paley, *Energy and the Imagination: A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought*, p. 30.

³⁹ M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, pp. 183-85.

⁴⁰ *The Illustrations to the Book of Job* are taken from Andrew Wright, *Blake's Job: A Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972). All illustrations refer to this edition unless otherwise stated.

⁴¹ Wright, p.10

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴³ S. Foster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*, p.225 FN

⁴⁴ See Blunt, *The Art of William Blake*, pp. 86-87, and Keynes, *Blake Studies*, pp. 43-44.

⁴⁵ Plate 121 Andrew Wright, Pl.XIV, "The Creation," p. 36.

⁴⁶ Plate 122 Keynes, *Blake Studies*, pp. 148-49. See Plate 34. For Plate 123 see close up in Michael Phillips ed., *Interpreting Blake* from John Beer, "Influence and Independence in Blake," p. 259.

⁴⁷ Wright, Pl.XVI, "The Fall of Satan," p. 40.

⁴⁸ E.W. West, trans., *Pahlavi Texts I*, S.B.E. V, pp. 128-29.

⁴⁹ Plate 125 Wright, Pl.XVIII, "Job's Sacrifice" p.44.

⁵⁰ Strabo, quoted in Sherwood Fox and R.E.K. Pemberton, ed., *Passages*, p. 37. Porphyry quoted by F. Cumont & J. Bidez, *Les Mages Hellenises*. Paris, 1938 Vol.II, p.73. See Bode and Nanavutty, *The Gathas*, p.15.

⁵¹ Free translation by Piloo Nanavutty, *Yasna* 36.6. James Darmesteter, trans., *The Zend Avesta* III, S.B.E. Vol.31, p.285, is as follows: "And to Thy most beauteous body do we make our deep acknowledgements, O, Ahura Mazda! . . . and to that one, the highest of the high, such as the Sun was called."

⁵² *Atar Nyayis* from James Darmesteter, trans., *The Zend Avesta* II, S.B.E. 23, pp. 360-61.

⁵³ Quoted in S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, p. 48.

⁵⁴ Crabb-Robinson, quoted by G.E. Bentley, *Blake Records*, p.450.

⁵⁵ S. Foster Damon, ed., *Blake's Grave: A Prophetic Book: Being William Blake's Illustrations for Robert Blair's The Grave: Arranged as Blake directed with a Commentary by S. Foster Damon* (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown Univ. Press, 1963). Introduction n. pagination.

⁵⁶ Wilhelm Geiger, *Civilization of the Eastern Iranians in Ancient Times*, English trans. by Dastur Dr. D.P. Sanjana, Vol.I, p.98, quoted by Bode, *Man, Soul, Immortality in Zoroastrianism*, pp. 98-99.

⁵⁷ E.W. West, trans., *Pahlavi Texts I*, S.B.E. V, pp.120-23.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.123.

⁵⁹ Plates 126-128 Bindman, Plates 474, 469, 470.

⁶⁰ Duchesne-Guillemin, trans., *The Gathas*, Yasna 30.11, p. 107.

⁶¹ E.W. West, trans., *Pahlavi Texts I*, S.B.E. V, p. 378.

⁶² Dadestan-i-Denig from Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*, p. 83.

⁶³ Quoted in Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, pp. 303-04.

⁶⁴ Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, pp. 27-28.

Though obviously Blake never experienced a Zoroastrian funeral ceremony, his plate is an astonishingly apt commentary on the mood which greets the soul on the fourth day after death. After continuous prayers for three days after death, the final prayers are conducted towards the end of the fourth night. Even as the first suspicion of dawn appears the head priest looks at his arm. When he can see a hair of his forearm he knows the celestial dawn has arrived and the soul has crossed over from this world into the next. The final prayers invoke upon the departed the blessings of the Fravashis of all those who have gone before and the mourners who are left behind realise, as they follow the long

roll call of the names of their forefathers, that the soul has, in reality, experienced a welcome home.

⁶⁵ Plate 129 Bindman, Pl.475. See Hagstrum, *Poet and Painter*, p. 54.

⁶⁶ E.W. West, trans., *Pahalvi Texts*, I, S.B.E. V, p. 126.

⁶⁷ Plate 130 Bindman, Pl. 467.

⁶⁸ West, *Pahalvi Texts* I, S.B.E. V, pp.126-27.

⁶⁹ Plate 131. In Morris Eaves, *William Blake's Theory of Art: Princeton Essays on the Arts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982), p. 166.

⁷⁰ Plate 132 Bindman, Pl. 476.

⁷¹ West, trans., *Pahlavi Texts* I, S.B.E. V, p. 350.

⁷² Yast XIX-II quoted by Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth*, p. 45.

⁷³ Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, p. 308.

⁷⁴ Zaehner, *The Teaching of the Magi*, p. 144.

⁷⁵ Boyce, *Textual Sources*, p. 94.

⁷⁶ E.W. West, trans., *Pahlavi Texts* I, S.B.E. V, pp. 124-30.

⁷⁷ Plate 133 David Fuller, *Blake's Heroic Argument*, Plate 8.

⁷⁸ E.W. West, trans., *Pahlavi Texts* I, S.B.E. V, pp. 123-24.

⁷⁹ Plate 134 *The River of Life*, see Raine, *Blake and Tradition* I, p. 98.

- ⁸⁰ Samuel Palmer to Alexander Gilchrist, 23rd August 1855, Keynes, *Letters*, p. 174.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.
- ⁸² Recounted by Crabb-Robinson, *Diary: Reminiscence and Correspondence of Henry Crabb-Robinson*. Selected and ed. Thomas Sadler, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1869), Vol.II, pp. 370-71.
- ⁸³ S. Foster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*, pp. 245-46.
- ⁸⁴ Jean H. Hagstrum, "Blake and the Sister Arts Tradition" in David V. Erdman and John E. Grant, ed., *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 90-91.

Appendix - A

The Germans studied various aspects of Persia's religion and culture. Schlegel stressed the links between Sanskrit, Persian, Greek and German and their superiority over other languages. With Novalis, he believed that only Eastern religion and culture could defeat the materialism of the Western world. Herder too turned to the East and translating translations of Sanskrit and Persian, emphasized the didactic element in such poetry. After an initial interest in Sanskrit literature during which Goethe produced two ballads on Indian subjects *Der Gott und die Bajadere* and the *Der Paria* trilogy, he rejected India's mythology and religion. Commenting on India's religious stories and myths he says:

I found all these monstrous personages unfit to form part of my poetical furniture, the imagination being either unable to conceive them at all, or only able to comprehend them under absurd and ridiculous forms.*

Goethe turned to Persia as an alternative in his *Divan* poems. The *Divan* poems were directly influenced by Hafiz, Persia's great lyric poet, yet they are not translations or trans-literations but entirely original compositions inspired by Goethe's Persian studies. These poems influenced Rückert, Platen, Heine, and Bodenstedt besides attracting other poets in Europe.

A *Divan* is Persian for a collection of miscellaneous poems and in Goethe's *Westöstlicher Diwan* or "Western-Eastern Divan," he had notes on the old Persians as

* Goethe's *Memoirs*, quoted by J.J. Modi, "Goethe's Parsi-nameh" pp. 128-29.

well as an entire book devoted to the Zoroastrians. This, the eleventh book of the twelve *Divan* poems, is the *Parsi-nameh*.

Appendix - B

The transmission of Zoroaster's message had been oral for centuries but was codified into the *Avesta*. This is the chief means by which Zoroastrian ideas have been preserved. The *Avesta* is composed in two languages; Gathic Avestan which is the language of the seventeen *Gathas*, the hymns of the prophet himself, and the "younger" Avestan language which consists of texts written as if revealed to Zoroaster by God. The antiquity, and linguistic and literary isolation of the *Gathas* make them extremely difficult to translate or interpret. Keys to them were provided by the earliest Rigvedic hymns, and the Younger Avesta and the Pahlavi texts which amplify and classify doctrines only mentioned in the *Gathas*. The *Gathas* are arranged in five formal groups according to their various metres and were made a part of the daily liturgy called the *Yasna* or 'act of worship.' The younger Avesta's *Yasna* grew to have seventy-two sections, some parts of which were taken from the *Yashts* or hymns to the lesser divinities of Zoroastrianism. A later addition to the scripture is the *Vendidad* (Vidaevo-data, "against the demons") a collection of prose texts in the late Younger Avestan probably written in the Parthian period, and mostly concerned with rituals and observances against evil. This became a part of the night celebration of the *Yasna* and is the only text not entirely recited from memory.

The *Visperad* (Vispa-Raat, "all The Essences"), is an extended *Yasna* with invocations especially for the seven Holy Days dedicated to the Amesha Spentas. The *Nyayesh* and *Yashts* are regular prayers to be recited by priests and lay persons; they are addressed to the elements--the Sun, the Moon, the Waters and Fire. They contain verses

from the *Gathas* and *Yashts*, as do the five *Gah* texts which are meant to be prayers recited during each of the five divisions of the twenty four hour long day.

The book most commonly used as a Book of Daily Prayer by the Zoroastrians is called The *Khordeh* or "*Little*" *Avesta*, it is a compilation of prayers for everyday use made from the main texts. Till the nineteenth century Zoroastrians learnt their prayers by heart, since then the *Khordeh Avesta* has been used. A great collection of all the Zoroastrian prayers was the Sasanian Great *Avesta*, committed to writing in the 5th-6th centuries, A.D. This contains in addition to all the named texts, the life and legends of the prophet, doctrinal matters, books of law, cosmogony and apocalyptic works. Because of the ravages caused by Islam when most fire temples were destroyed, not a single copy of this book exists. It survives however through a detailed summary given in a Pahlavi work called the *Denkart* or "Acts of Religion." Zadspram a priest of the ninth century A.D. compiled these selections from the Zand along with details of the life of Zoroaster; from this book we see that the extant texts are only a quarter of the entire Zoroastrian canon. The prayers have survived because they were in constant daily use, and besides being known by heart, were set down in copies by priests for their own personal use. Some fragments of the texts which survive are portions of the *Hadhokt Nask*, *The Nirangistan* and *Herbadistan*.

The *Zand* or the Pahlavi "Interpretation" is a glossary, commentary and translation of the *Avesta*. There was an original Avestan *Zand* and later various *Zands* appeared. The Sasanians imposed their own middle Persian for the *Zand* which is the only one to survive fully. Since all the Avestan texts, except the *Yashts* have their *Zand*, the two are spoken of together as the *Zand-Avesta*. One of the *Zands* of lost originals is the Pahlavi Book of the Creation the *Bundahishn* which exists in two forms--the *Iranian*

or *Greater Bundahishn* and the *Indian Bunduhishn*.

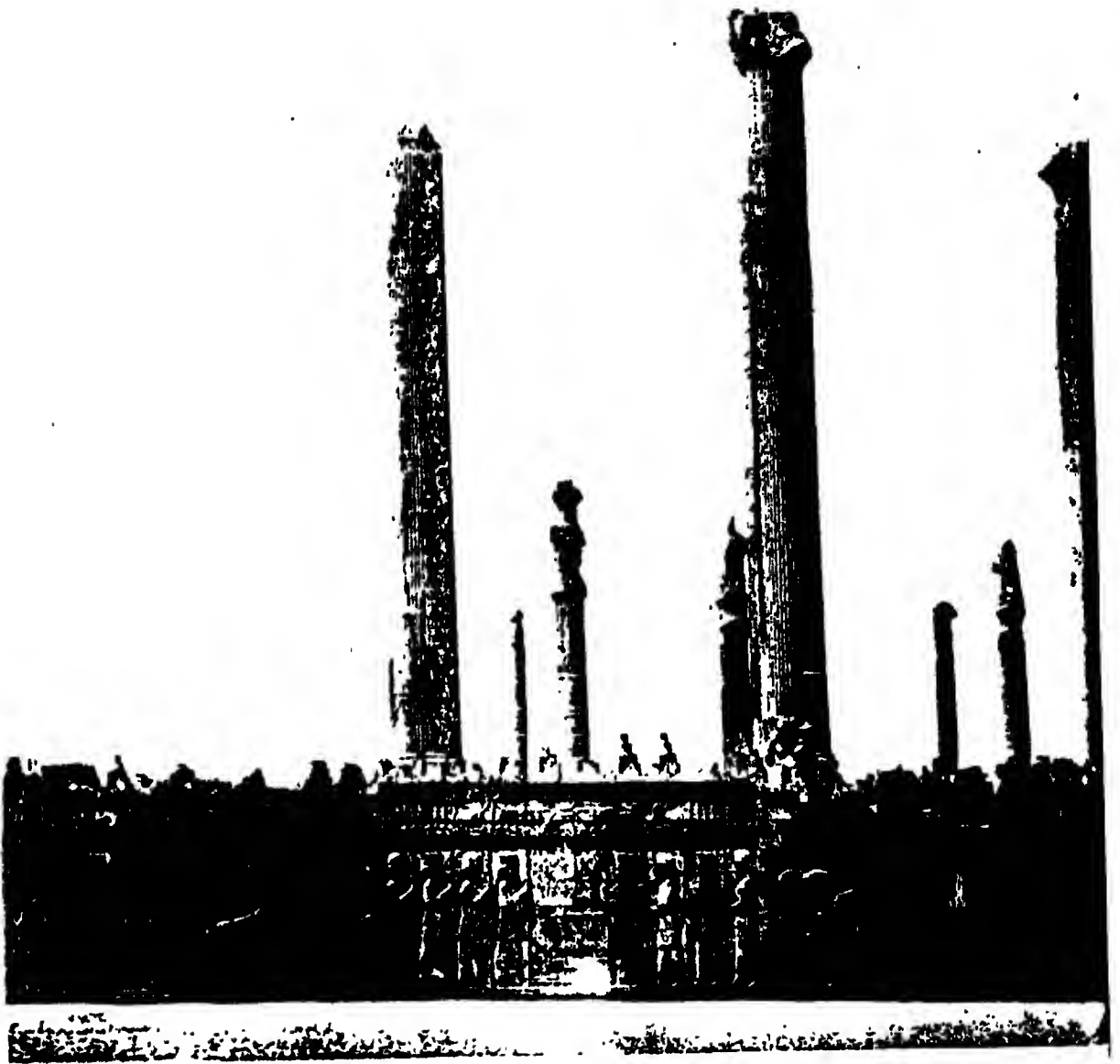
Some later writings also exist in Persian, as well as Sanskrit and Gujarati, because from the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, priests in India the most important of whom was Neryosangh Dhaval began translating Avestan texts into Indian languages. Some Pahlavi texts were also transcribed into the clear Avestan script, and this interpretation was known as "Pa-zand." Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries there was correspondence on religious matters between Irani and Parsi priests. The Iranis answered questions which the Parsis' posed and these came to be known as the Persian *Rivayats*, which are important because they put into writing several rituals and observances. Parsi priests too began interpreting their own religion and recording details of ceremonies and rituals, particularly after their contacts with Christianity in British India. Besides religious details, historical records of the Iranian empire exist in Achaemenian, Parthian and Sasanian compilations and inscriptions, which also reveal details of the faith. The Sasanian *Book of Kings* or *Shahnama* became part of the legends of Persia and it survives today in the epic version which Firdausi completed in 1000 A.D. Greek, Muslim and Arab writers, European travellers, merchants and antiquarians and the Parsi poem *The Kissah-i-Sanjan* all add to knowledge about this ancient religion and its history.

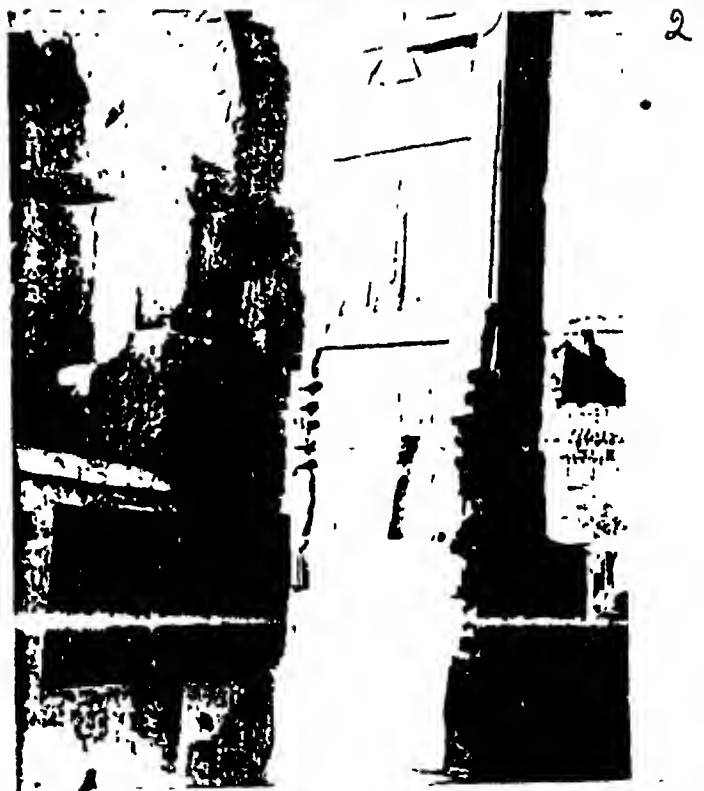
Appendix - C

Marg: A Magazine of the Arts, published in September, 1971, a special issue on Persepolis to coincide with the 2500th Anniversary Celebration of Iran. This, Volume XXIV, No.:4, contains photographs taken by the *Marg* Research Team who visited Persepolis, Pasargadae and Naqsh-e-Rostam in 1970. Hundreds of years earlier European travellers had made painstaking sketches and drawings of the same sites. While it has not been possible to reproduce all of these antiquarian and travellers engravings and drawings, they cover practically every aspect of these great ruins. The details observed make the faithful copies almost photographic in their reproduction. The illustrations Blake had worked on and could have seen are in the text of the thesis. Here are reproduced some photographs from *Marg* to compare with those antique plates.

1. Persepolis, The Apadana Palace. Cornelius Le Bruyn reproduces the entire, colossal platform in a very large and intricately detailed plate.
2. Xerxes's Palace and Throne Hall. The door jamb of the Treasury with relief showing the seated king and the Fravashi overhead, is also copied by Le Bruyn.
3. Darius's Palace. The gateways with the carving of the hero-king mastering a lion has also been reproduced by Le Bruyn. The reliefs of Persepolis are carved with the deliberate aim of fashioning details into symbols, where "abstract and concrete are polarised into a radiant geometry" (*Marg* p. 41).
4. A close up of the gateway of the throne hall in Darius's palace. A lion, and a bird-headed monster can be seen. Reproduced by Le Bruyn.

5. The intricate details of the design of the symbol of Divinity, which intrigued travellers from the earliest days of recorded history. A close up of the man-lion winged creature shows facial details of the beard and hair lost in the engravings of some European travellers.
6. A photograph of the scene reproduced in Bryant's *Mythology* from Kaempfer's *Amoenitatum Exoticarum*, which was probably the initial introduction of Blake to Zoroastrianism.
7. Naqsh-i-Rustam. The Tomb of Xerxes modelled on that of his father. Bryant reproduces this scene in the plate on "The Plain of the Magi" which he copied from Le Bruyn.
8. The carvings below the tombs of Naqsh-i-Rustam, were very popular with the travellers and antiquarians of Blake's age. This is supposed to be the bas relief of Shahpur I accepting the homage of the Roman European Valerian. It is one of the earliest equestrian statues and is a magnificent study of the horse.



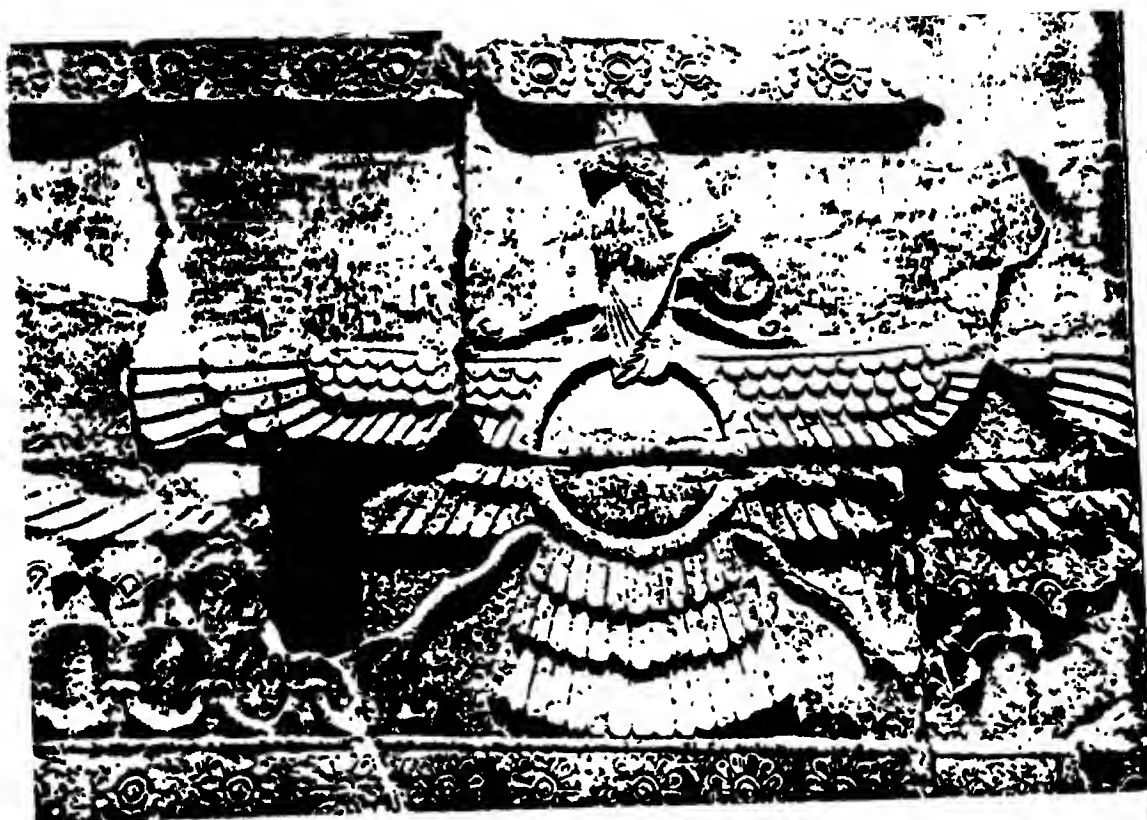




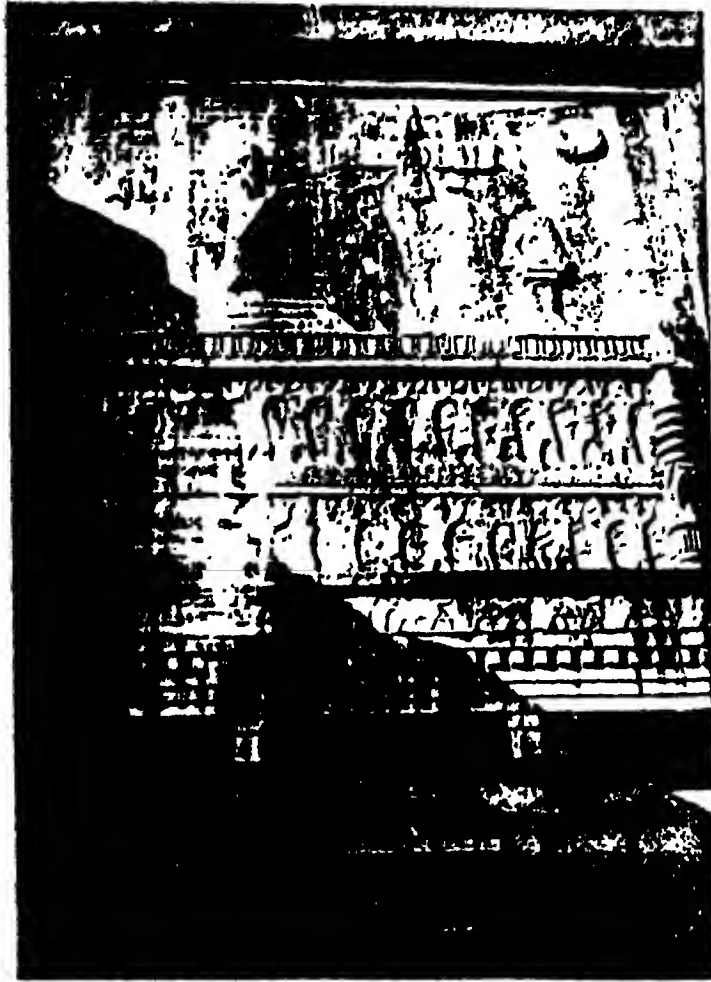
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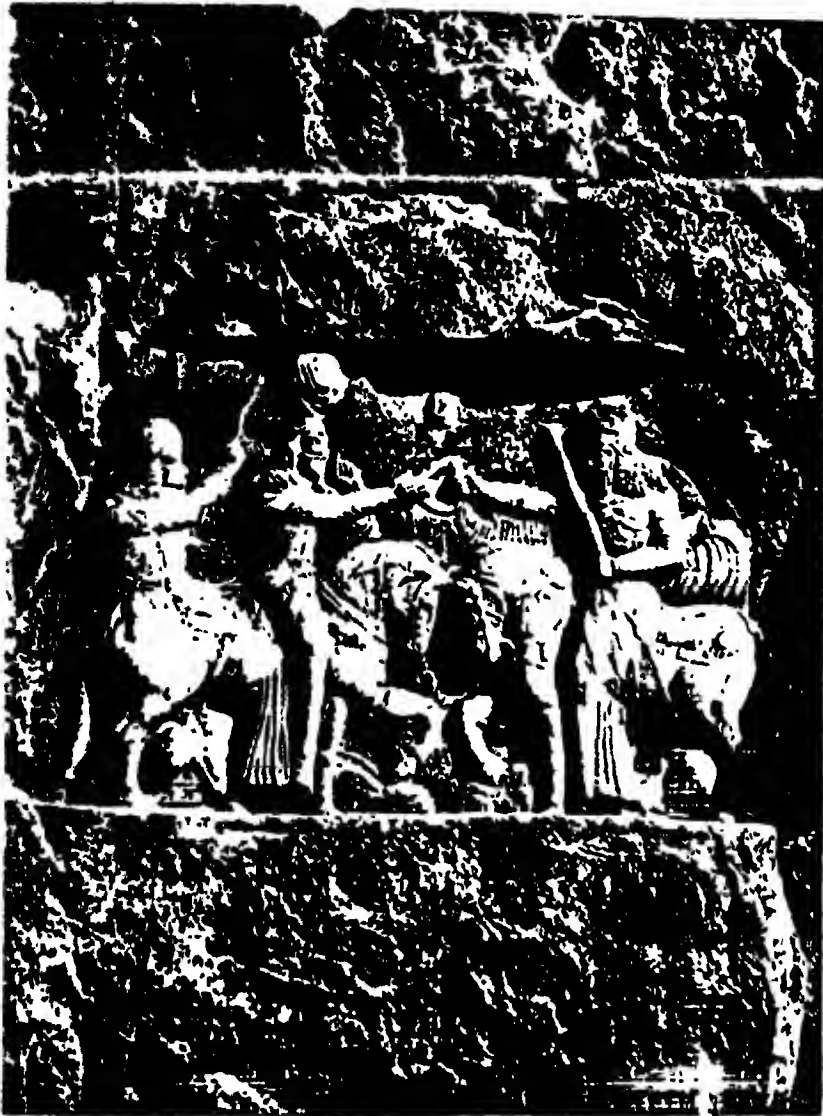


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8



Sir William Jones, regarded as a foremost orientalist, and the Founder of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, published in 1771, a letter in French to Anquetil where he denied the veracity of Anquetil's *Zend-Avesta* declaring it to be a forgery palmed off on the young man by the Dasturs of Surat.

Twenty years were to pass before Anquetil was vindicated and William Jones admitted his mistake, publishing in his *Works*, a *Grammar* and a *History of the Persian Language* which recognised Anquetil's contribution.

Appendix - E

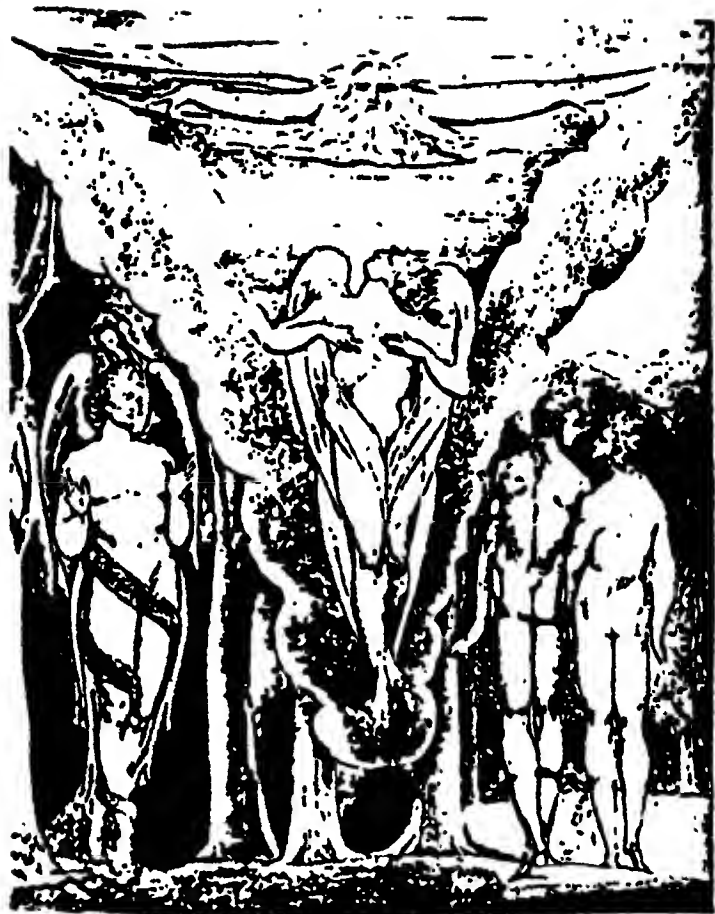
Blake's dualistic use of the floating winged symbol can be seen in a number of plates. The dualistic uses noted in the thesis have been seen by many critics. Kathlene Raine (*Blake and Tradition*, Vol. II, pp. 261-63) stresses the importance Blake gave to the "winged disc and serpent" which he possibly worked on in Bryant's *Mythology* and also traces the origin of this apprentice work to Stukeley's *Abury*. Dr. Raine discussing Plate 33[37]D of *Jerusalem* also notices the distinct division of the illustration and relates its positive aspect to the Egyptian emblem of the Trinity. The Father is the circle, the Son the serpent, and the wings the Holy Ghost. She identifies the upper portion as "showing Albion's world upheld by the Father and Holy Ghost," and contrasts it with the batwinged evil of the lower half of the illustration. Referring to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* she sees contrasting opposites of good and evil in the eagle wings and serpent of Plate 15. She reiterates finally that "the wholeness of man expressed in the disc is reconciliation of contraries." While this symbol was, as seen in the thesis, originally Egyptian, Bryant, Blake's mentor has clearly placed its positive manifestation in the Persian tradition even stating that part of the Plate is taken "From the ruins of Naki Rustam."

Jean Hagstrum too sees the dualism. He feels that

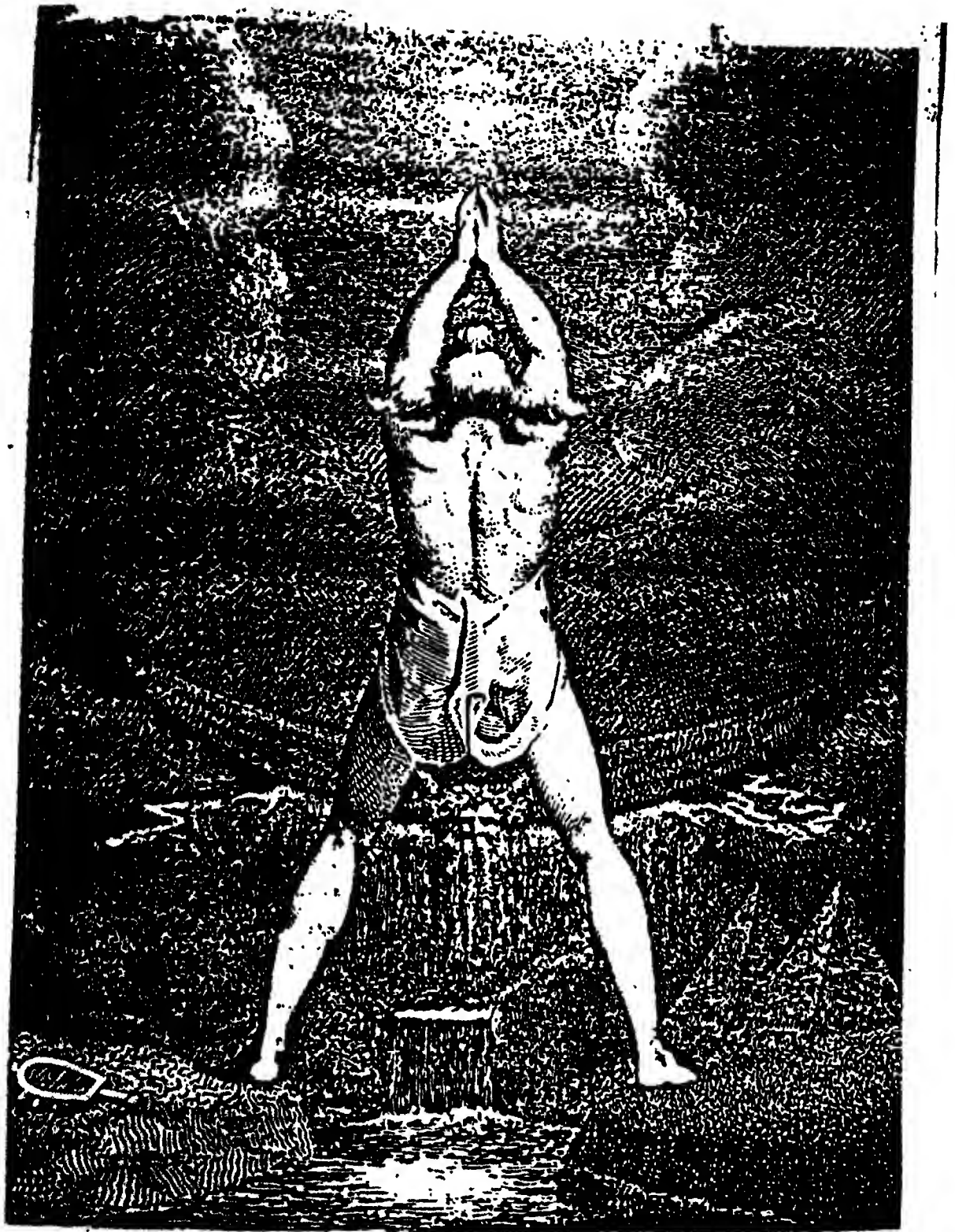
Blake's use of outstretched arms symbolizes the desire for the infinite as well as becomes a symbol for a stern Urizen-Jehovah like image of God (Hagstrum, *William Blake: Poet and Painter*, pp. 77 and 43). Batwings are always used by Blake as a symbol of oppression and tyranny for the "debasing power of man's selfish reason" (Hagstrum, p. 115). This negative use is clearly seen in two plates "The Lazar House" and "Christ's Ugly Dream" where a brooding, floating figure spreads despair and darkness. On the other hand in the water-colour entitled "Satan's and Raphael's Entries into Paradise," a Fravashi-like figure spreads its wings in welcome and light streams down on Raphael while Satan is forced to stand outside the beams of illumination. This calls to mind the Zoroastrian belief that evil creatures alone lack a Fravashi or eternal self. Anthony Blunt had seen in this figure unbending sternness, a reflection of Jupiter Pluvius, the arms extended being the clouds from which rain falls (Anthony Blunt, *The Art of William Blake*, p. 41). The final example here of Blake's ambivalent approach to this symbol is the plate called "The Fertilization of Egypt." Here a solemn presence guards the life-giving waters of Egypt while a dog-headed priest directs his worship both to this figure and to a star above. Blake had engraved this design from Fuseli, for Darwin's *Botanic Garden* (1791)--the first edition. This illustration faces the lines on the Monsoon, "High O'er his head the beams of Sirius glow/And, Dog of Nile, Anubis barks below." While A.S. Roe in an article "The Thunder of Egypt" concludes that this plate is an interpretation of the Fallen world, John Beer in "Blake, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, Some Cross-Currents and Parallels 1789-1805," feels it is more an exploration on the part of both Blake and Fuseli of an aspect of mythology they had not fully fathomed (See Paley & Phillips, *William Blake: Essays in honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes*, pp. 231-259). However, here, the outstretched wings of the flying figure seem to suggest







(105) *Satan's and Raphael's Entries into Paradise*, water color



not only the strength and invincible power of the forces of nature but also a barrier. Blake in this early work was then incorporating both positive and negative aspects in this design. Throughout his creative life Blake would return to this design until in the last plate of *Jerusalem* it straddles the page, finally forming the divine base of the perfected and renewed earth (*See Plates*).

1. Christ's Ugly Dream, from the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge reproduced from Kathleen Raine; *The Human Face of God: William Blake and the Book of Job* plate 88.
2. The Lazar House or The House of Death, Tate Gallery, reproduced from Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, Vol. II, p. 96.
3. Satan's and Raphael's Entries into Paradise. Water-colour at the Henry E. Huntington Library. Reproduced from David V. Erdman & John E. Grant, ed., *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic* p. 105.
4. The Fertilization of Egypt. Wash-drawing British Museum, Dept. of Prints and Drawings. Reproduced from Morton D. Paley & Michael Phillips, *William Blake: Essays in honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes*, p. 249.

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particularly the noble Ruins of the famous Palace of Persepolis, called Chelminar by the Persians. The whole being delineated on the spot, from the respective objects. To which is added: An Account of the Journey by Mr. I.S. Brants, Ambassador from Muscovy through Russia and Tartary to China; together with Remarks on the Travels of Sir John Chardin, & Mr. Kempfer & a Letter written to the Author on that Subject. Trans. from the original French. London: Printed for A. Bettesworth, & C. Hitch. S. Brit. C. Davis, J. Clarke, S. Harding. D Browne, A. Millar, J. Shuckburg & T. Osborne. MDCCXXXVII.

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Dantur Veterum Persarum Scriphirae & Linguae (ut hae jam primò Europae producantur & Liberato Orbi potissimò reddantur) Specimina. De Persiae ejusdemque Linguae Nominibus, deque hujus Dialectus & à modernâ differentiis strictim, agitur.

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